



square

The digital photographer's
guide to the square format

Andrew S. Gibson

Introduction

I like the square format and it seems that I'm not the only one. There are plenty of hobbyist and professional photographers who use the square format (some almost exclusively). A search on Flickr reveals numerous groups dedicated to square format photography, and shows that, even in this digital age, there are lots of photographers using medium format film cameras. Toy cameras like Holgas and Dianas also utilise the square format, as do smartphone apps like Instagram. The square format certainly isn't dead. The question is, why would you use it – or even should you?

For me the main enjoyment I get out of using the square format is to do with composition. The change from a rectangular frame alters my entire approach. Within the rectangular frame, the eye is directed from side to side (or up and down in the portrait format) and that has a powerful effect on the way the viewer's eye moves around the photo. The square format, on the other hand, has an inherent sense of balance and geometry that rectangular formats lack.

Square format photos have a powerful element of design to them. Shapes, and the negative space around them, become more prominent. You can simplify composition almost to the point of abstraction. Furthermore, square prints look good on the wall. It's a format suited to photographers that want to produce art.

There are many photographers using square format film cameras, but photographers with digital cameras shouldn't feel left out. I've seen Flickr groups dedicated to the square format with rules that state that only photos taken with square format *film* cameras may be submitted. The owners of each group have the right to impose



Dongtai Road Antiques Market, Shanghai, China
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens, 1/180 second @ f4, ISO 400

whatever rules they wish, but I don't believe that's totally fair. Don't feel like you can't use the square format if you have a digital camera. One of the benefits of digital cameras is their versatility. It's like having a square format and a 35mm format camera in the same body – you can use whichever suits the subject that you're photographing.

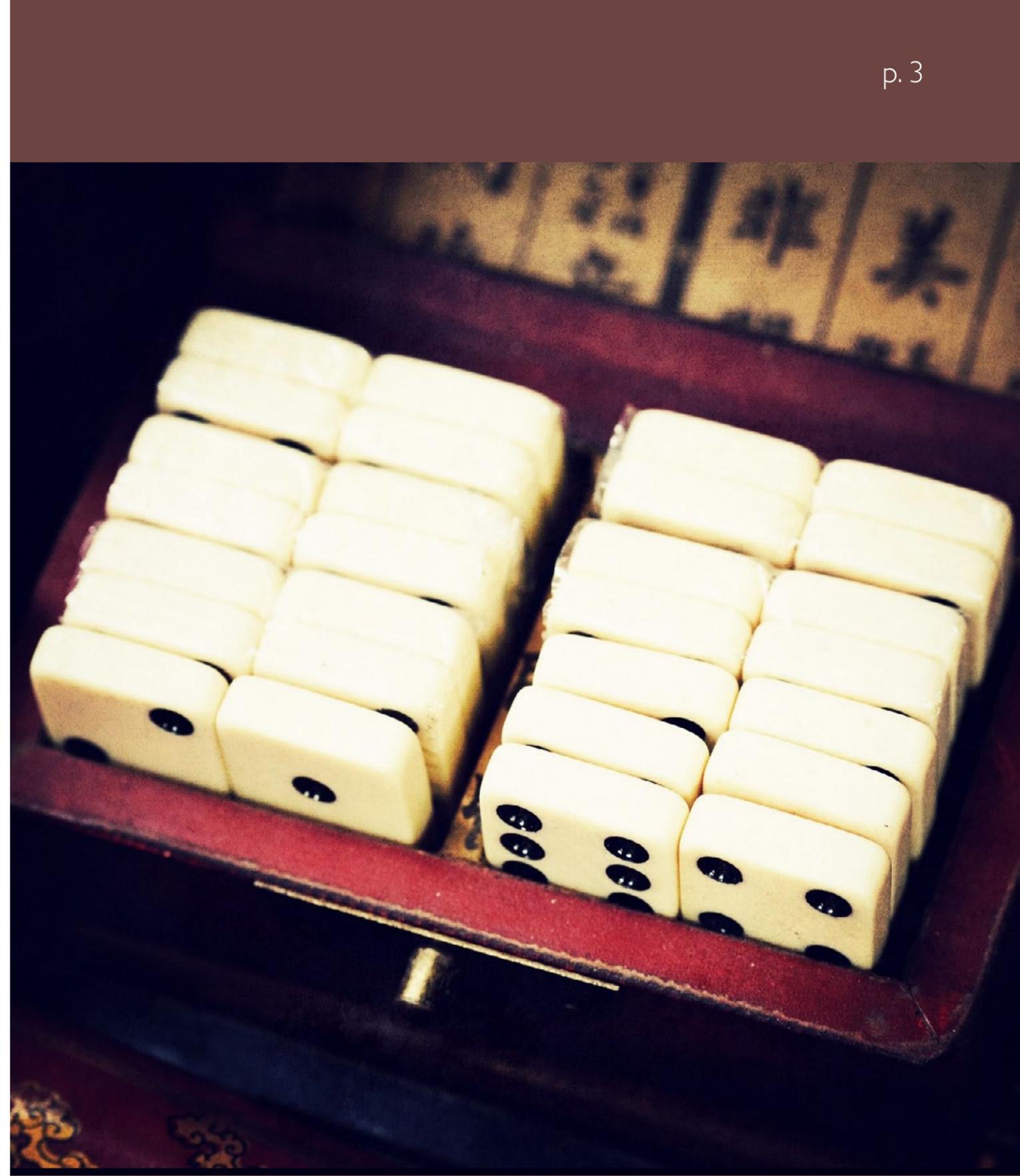
This ebook is written for photographers with digital cameras who want to explore the square format. But I feel it's important to understand its roots. The square format originated and flourished (and is experiencing something of a renaissance today) thanks to medium format film cameras. I've included case studies with two photographers whose work I admire immensely, and use film. Please go to the websites of [Flavia Schaller](#) and [Matt Toynbee](#) and take a look at their work. They will inspire you to go out and make some beautiful square images for yourself.

(There are several links in this ebook, whenever you see red text that means you can click on the link and the website will open in your default browser).

Any ebook of this nature needs a few post-processing tutorials to provide you with the techniques you need to put the ideas in the ebook into action. I've placed the tutorials at the end of the ebook, in the appendixes. This is mainly because I appreciate that there will be many readers who know how to do this stuff already, and won't need to refer to them. By placing them at the back, they don't interfere with the flow of the ebook, but they are there if you need them.

Happy shooting,

Andrew S. Gibson



The history of the square format

The first square format camera was introduced by Rollei in 1929. The reason that it used the square format is probably more to do with the twin lens reflex design than anything else – taking a photo requires that you look through a magnifier at a focusing screen on top of the camera. The inconvenience of turning a twin lens reflex camera on its side means that it can really only be used in the upright position. Rollei cameras were used by photographers like Richard Avedon, Irving Penn and Robert Doisneau. Diane Arbus used a Mamiya twin lens reflex camera. All these photographers used the square format.

Hasselblad made the 1600F – a square medium format camera – in 1948, and stuck with the square format in their rollfilm cameras up until the release of their H-System digital cameras in 2002. Hasselblad film cameras have a reputation for quality and were the camera system of choice for many professional studio photographers up until about decade ago. One reason for their popularity, apart from the quality, was the convenience of the square format. You could take a photo, such as a portrait, leave some empty space around it and then it could be cropped afterwards to fit the space for which it was intended.

The square format never caught on in 35mm cameras probably because the reduced image area didn't give the required quality when printed (both Robot and Zeiss produced 35mm square format cameras in the 1930s and 40s – you might still be able to buy one second-hand if you search hard enough).



The square format has fallen out of favour in recent years, at least with digital camera makers. Even digital Hasselblad bodies now use a rectangular aspect ratio rather than the square format.

However, the square format has survived in what could be described as a curious relic – toy cameras like the Holga and Diana. The Holga, for example, originated in China in 1981 when businessman and factory owner T.M. Lee designed the first model. The camera was aimed at working class Chinese families and used the 120 film that was prevalent at the time. However, the increased availability of 35mm film and cheap cameras from foreign competitors meant that the Holga was not a commercial success.

In 1982, Mr. Lee started selling the Holga in Hong Kong in an attempt to market it internationally. The Holga gradually gained popularity amongst artists and photographers who liked the lo-fi camera and the quirky images created by its plastic lens and light-leak prone body. Today, toy cameras like the Holga and Diana are widely used by film enthusiasts, and even professional photographers, who like the feel and aesthetic qualities of the images they produce.

Above: An original Rolleiflex camera. Note the twin lens design on the front – one lens is used for looking at the subject through, and the other to take the photo. The design of the camera means you can't turn it on its side to take photos, so the square format is the most practical aspect ratio to use.

Going square

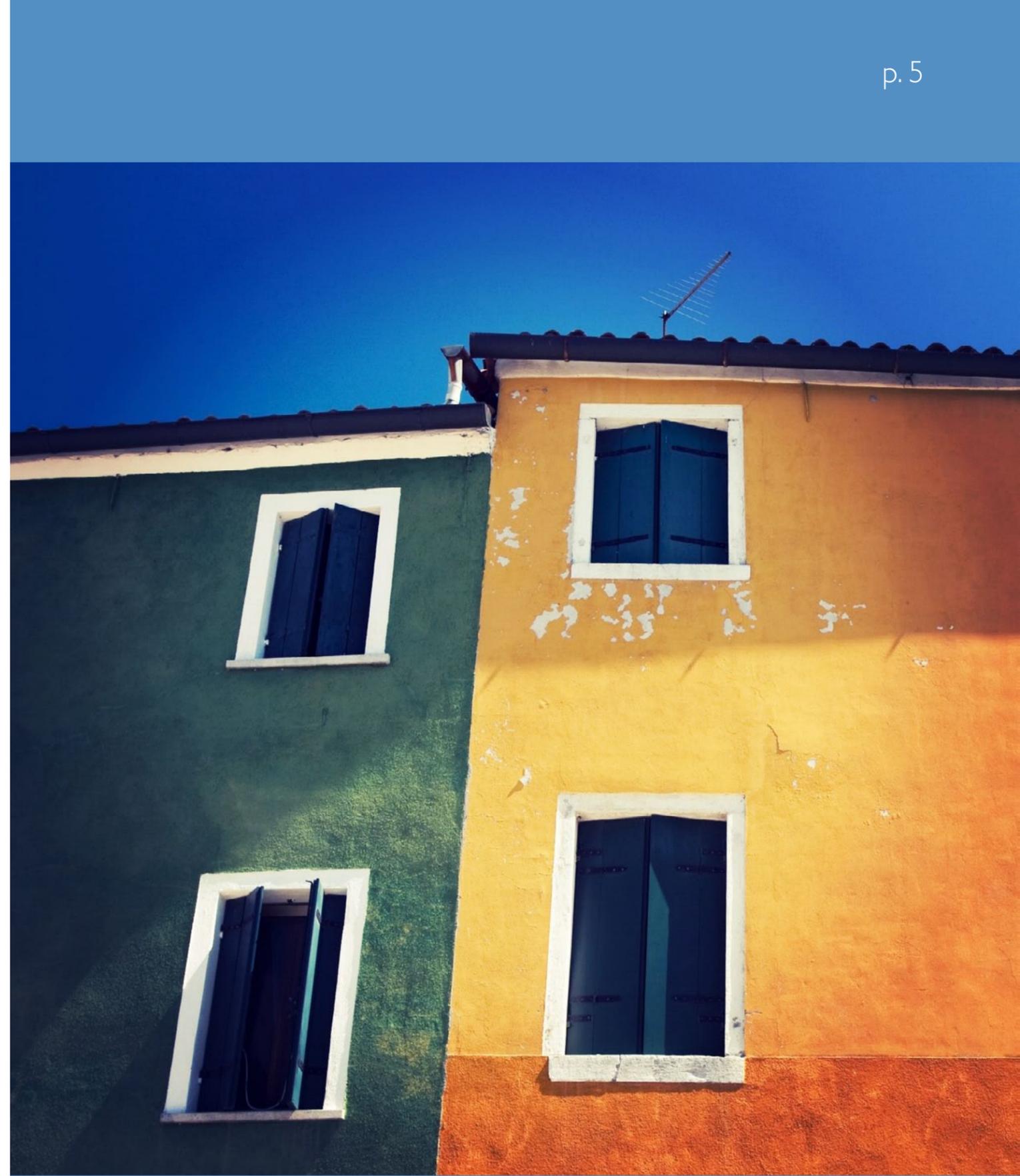
There are three ways to create square format images:

1. Use a square format film camera, process the film and scan the negatives using a high quality flatbed scanner. Medium format film cameras like Rolleiflex, Mamiya, Pentacoon or Hasselblad are relatively cheap on eBay. You can also use a toy camera like a Holga or Diana that uses rollfilm. There are also some unusual older cameras around that use the square format – such as the Robot Star cameras that create a 24mm by 24mm negative on 35mm film.

Film cameras are popular with black and white photographers as black and white film is easy and inexpensive to develop at home (colour film has precise temperature tolerances and is more difficult to process). If you have your own black and white darkroom, this is a good way of producing large size square prints. This arrangement probably best suits photographers that have had darkrooms since the film era. If you're new to film photography and would like to try traditional darkroom printing, you should be aware that it's not easy – the learning curve is steep and it will take you some time to learn to produce exhibition quality prints.

2. Take a photo with a digital compact, SLR or medium format camera and crop it to the square format. Some cameras with Live View mode have an option that lets you shoot using the square format in live view, with the 'unused' part of the frame greyed out, and there are mirrorless cameras that can display a square image in an electronic viewfinder.

3. Use a smartphone and convert the photos to square format using an app such as Instagram for the iPhone.



*Burano, Italy
Canon EOS 40D, 17-40mm lens @ 24mm, 1/100 second @ f6.3, ISO 100*

Square subjects



The square format works best with subjects like the landscape, seascapes, portraits, fashion, the nude, architecture, still life, travel, documentary, details and abstracts. It seems to suit subjects that are artistic in nature – the sort of subject matter that a fine art photographer would explore. It's probably one of the reasons that the square format is popular with fine art photographers.



The 35mm problem

The aspect ratio of the 35mm frame has been with us ever since Oskar Barnack designed the first Leica camera back in the 1930s. Aspect ratio is the term that describes the relation of the width of a photo to its height. A photo taken with a 35mm camera has an aspect ratio of 3:2 – in other words it's one and a half times as long as it is high. This corresponds to the dimensions of a 35mm negative or full frame sensor: 36mm by 24mm. The width always comes first in the aspect ratio (turn the camera on its side and the aspect ratio changes to 2:3).

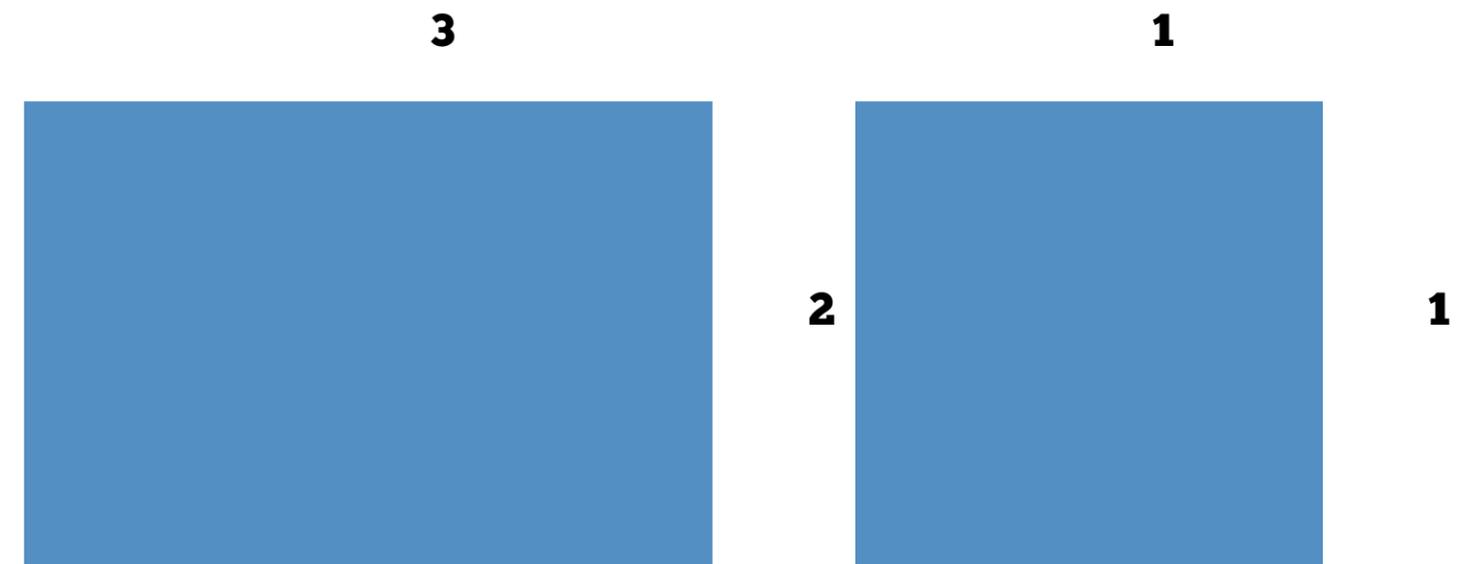
If you have a digital SLR camera with a crop sensor the aspect ratio is the same. The sensor is smaller, but the relationship between its width and height has been retained. The only exception are cameras that use the micro four-thirds format. These sensors have an aspect ratio of 4:3.

The 3:2 aspect ratio of 35mm cameras does, however, present the photographer with a compositional problem. It's not always easy to utilise all the space within the frame when you take a photo. It depends on the subject, but there is often space around the subject that is difficult to fill with something interesting. The result is empty space that isn't utilised very well.

This is more of a problem when you turn the camera on its side to take a photo in the portrait orientation. In the landscape format, the eye travels quite easily from side to side. In the portrait format, the 3:2 aspect ratio of the 35mm format often seems too long and narrow, especially when photographing the landscape as a subject where you can end up with too much sky. I've always found the portrait format a little awkward and unnatural to use, and prefer the landscape format for the majority of my 35mm photos.

One solution, if you haven't used the space within the 35mm frame effectively, is to strengthen the composition of the image at the post-processing stage by cropping. You can crop arbitrarily, until it looks right, or you can crop to a specific aspect ratio, such as the square format (the aspect ratio is 1:1).

I see cropping to the square format as a process of simplifying the composition – it's a little like a writer trimming a third of the words from an article or book. The writer is forced to make every word count. When you crop to a square, you have to decide which third of the image to discard – and you will be left with the strongest two-thirds.



These rectangles show the difference between the aspect ratios of the 35mm and square formats. A photo taken with a 35mm camera is one and a half times as wide as it is high. In ratio terms, it has an aspect ratio of 3:2. The square format, on the other hand, has an aspect ratio of 1:1. Micro four-thirds cameras come somewhere in-between with an aspect ratio of 4:3.

This is a good example of a photo that becomes stronger cropped to the square format. The compositional problem that I had to solve when I took this photo was what to do with all the empty space around the statue. My first thought was that it could be quite effective as a framing device. But now I think that there is just too much empty space around the statue, and that it benefits from cropping to a square. The statue is larger within the frame and the eye can take in the details of the statue rather than go on a somewhat wasted journey around the edges of the frame (there is nothing interesting to see there).

I'm sure there will be some people who prefer the original version to the cropped one. That's part of the fun of photography. There are no set rules, there is usually more than one way of doing things, and we all have different opinions about the effectiveness of certain techniques or ideas. Everything in this eBook is presented in that spirit. It's a guide – a set of ideas to think about – not a strict set of rules that must be followed.

The photo on the right was taken with an EOS 40D camera. Photos from this camera, like most digital SLRs, have an aspect ratio of 3:2. Cropping to the square format produced the image on the right.

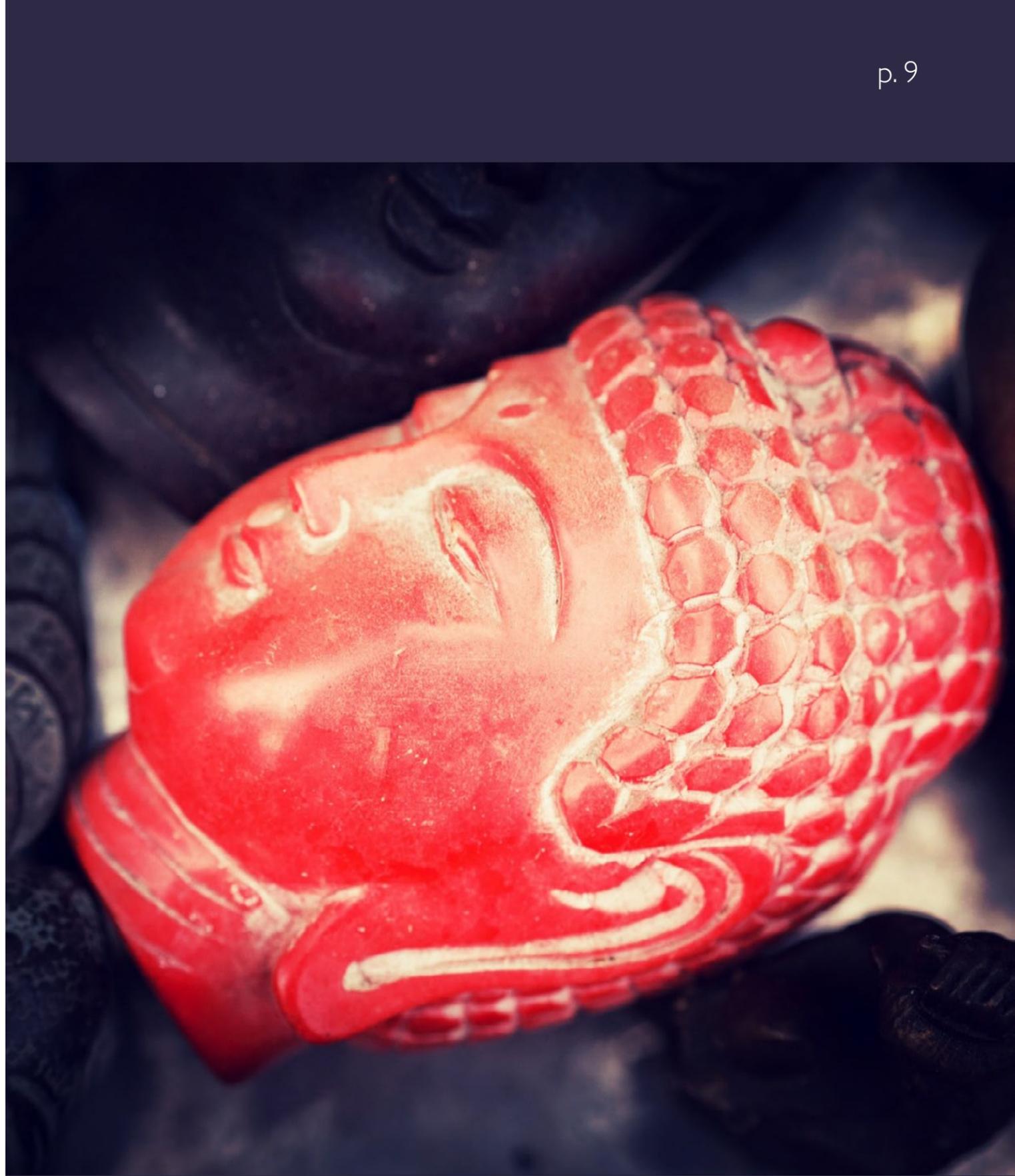


Cropping square

The advantage of using a 35mm digital camera is that you can crop your images to the square format when you want, but you don't lose the use of the full 35mm frame. It's like having two cameras in one. Cropping your photos to the square format will improve your awareness of the space within the 35mm frame, and how to compose within it, as well as the square frame.

One approach towards creating square images with a digital camera is to shoot purposefully with the intention to crop to the square format afterwards. With this technique, you are not really interested in the rectangular frame – just the central square portion of it. To help you visualise what the scene will look like in the square format, you can always cut a square in a piece of card and tape it to the back of your camera over the LCD screen. You can then check the composition when you play your photos back, or use the camera in Live View (if you have it) and compose your photos that way. Some cameras have a function in live view that lets you shoot in the square format. The unused part of the image is greyed out by the camera when you look at the LCD screen. Some mirrorless cameras can also display a square image in the viewfinder.

Thanks to the optical design of your camera lens the image quality is always better at the centre of the image than the edges. With this in mind you should compose your photos so that you can crop from the centre of the frame, and not the edges.





What do I look for when I'm cropping my images to a square? In this case, the decision was quite simple, as the lotus design is an obvious choice to place in the centre of a square image. I took the image with the intention of cropping it to a square in post-processing, and kept the design in the centre of the frame as that's the sharpest part of the image.

After cropping, I increased the contrast of the image slightly and darkened the edges to guide the eye towards the centre of the image. Post-processing work doesn't necessarily finish with the crop, the image may benefit from some local brightness and contrast adjustments.



*Jing'an Temple, Shanghai, China
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm, 1/180 second @ f25, ISO 3200*



I had a different priority when cropping this image. My main concern was that the leftmost calligraphy brush was too light – from a compositional point of view it would have been better if it was a dark colour like the others. For me, the brightness of the brush interrupts the natural rhythm of the composition created by the row of brushes, so I cropped to exclude the light-coloured brush. I'm not using the centre of the frame, which would be ideal, but the strength of the composition is more important.



Creative exercise

Cropping your existing photos is a great rainy day activity, and may help you revitalise images that you overlooked in the past. Take a look at your existing photos and see if you can crop them to the square format. This works with your stronger images as well as your weaker ones – it's surprising how many images can be improved further by cropping to a square. It's also a good exercise in composition. Can you improve the composition of any of your photos by cropping to the square format?

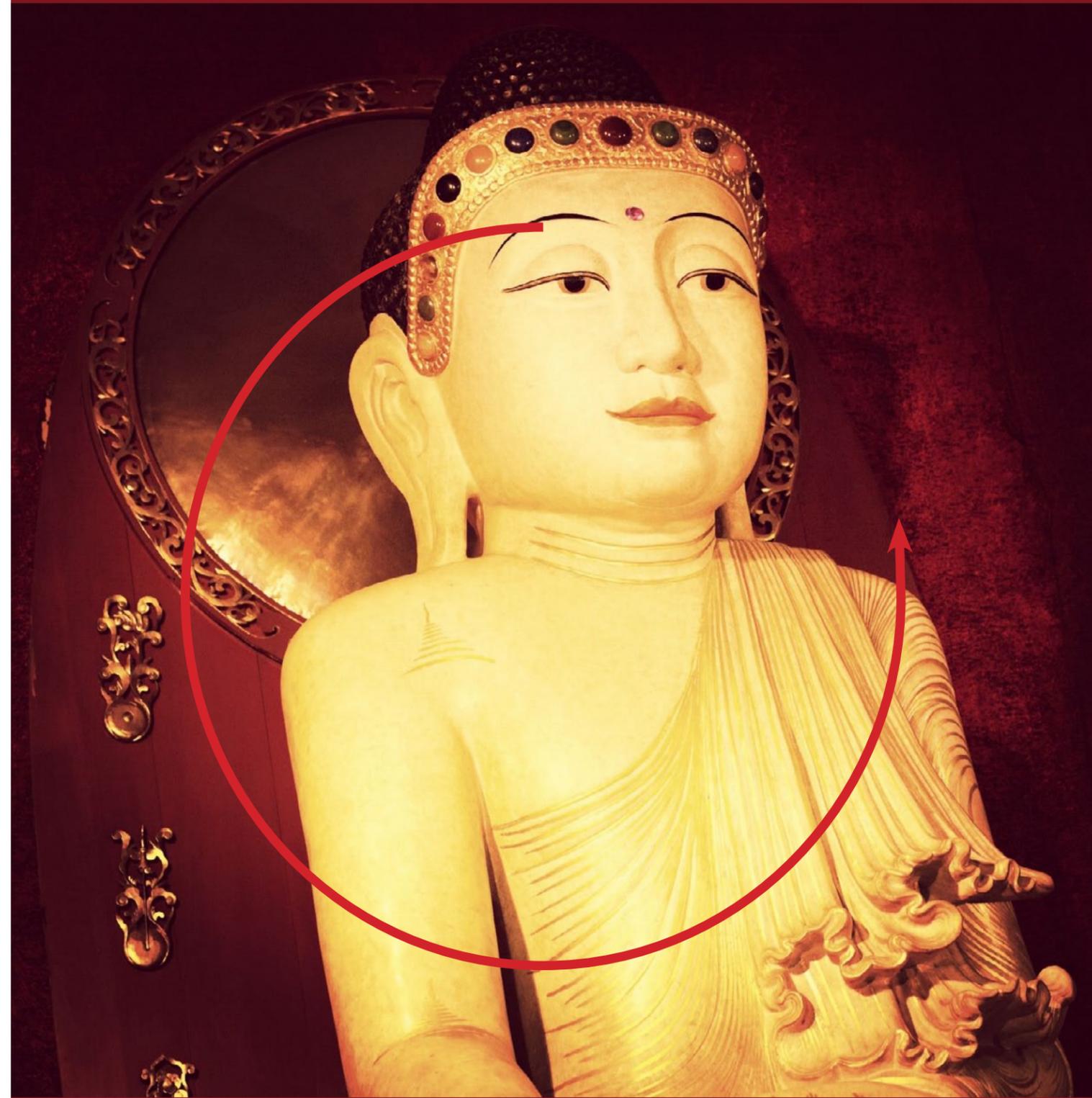
Design & balance

Photos taken with digital SLRs have a rectangular shape. There are exceptions – some cameras give you the option of using alternative aspect ratios such as the square. But for most photographers, the photos that come out of their cameras have a rectangular shape. You may be wondering then, why anyone would crop that to a square?

The main reason is composition. Square photos have a certain beauty to the design that rectangular images lack. The viewer's eye moves around the image in a circle to take everything in, rather than from side to side (or up and down). There is less wasted space around the subject. You can create compositions with the subject in the centre of the frame just as successfully as compositions with the subject off-centre. Experimenting with the square format is fun, and an extra benefit is that it will make you more aware of the way you use composition within the rectangular frame.

One of the strengths of the square format is that it's quite easy to use the space within the frame well. It's open to experimentation – you can place the subject in various positions within the frame to find the most effective one. Especially if you're cropping from a 35mm photo within Lightroom or Photoshop – you'll have some leeway to place the subject within different parts of the frame, and see what works best.

When you're looking at a horizontal 35mm photo your eye moves from one side of the frame to the other. The rectangle, laying on its side, is a very stable shape. If the frame is vertical, your eye moves up and down. Your eye is following the longest dimension. The frame is taller than it is wide, and doesn't appear so stable.



*Jing'an Temple, Shanghai, China
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens, 1/180 second @ f5.6, ISO 3200*

Both of these shapes also have an inherent sense of gravity. This comes across most in landscape photos. When moving around in our day to day lives we have an innate sense of what is the right way up. We have ground below our feet and sky above our heads. If we throw something up into the air, it falls back down to earth. The words up and down mean precisely that. We know how the world around us behaves, and we expect to see that replicated in photos.

On the other hand, a square image has four equal sides. Your eye isn't enticed by the shape of the frame to move in any particular directions. The square is neither particularly stable nor unstable, the shape of the frame doesn't pull the eye in one direction or the other. The square frame is inherently balanced. This gives you more freedom when you place the elements within the photo. I like to think of the elements as objects floating in space without gravity. The square frame can liberate you from the sense of gravity that comes with the rectangular frame.

The square format changes the dynamics of the image. As you look through the images in this eBook, and the work of other photographers that use the square format, pay attention to the way that your eye moves around the image. Try and get a feel for the balance within the composition. You more awareness you have of these things, the more you can use them in your photos.





How many shapes can you see in these photos? Whether it's circles, squares, diamonds or triangles, the technique of composing using geometric shapes within the square format is very powerful. The square format lends itself better to this type of composition than any rectangular aspect ratio. Shapes become stronger in black and white photos without the distraction of colour. Shapes are also simple – note the simplicity of design in each image.

The four S's

You may be wondering whether you should still compose according to the rule of thirds within the square format. My advice is – don't. The rule of thirds is a guideline only, and it's really no more than a simplification of the principle of the golden mean, which only applies when used in a rectangle with an aspect ratio of 1.618:1 (close to the 3:2 aspect ratio of the 35mm frame). In other words, it's a rule designed to be applied within the 35mm frame. If you use it within other formats the result may look forced or formulaic.

Instead, concentrate on what I call the four S's of composition – shape, simplicity, space and subtlety. Think about each of these elements and how they relate to the strength of the square format – the balance within the image.

We've already seen that shape becomes more powerful within the square format than within a rectangular frame. There is also a strong correlation between shape and simplicity. Shapes become stronger as the composition becomes more simple.

Another consideration is how the elements within the photo work together, and with the negative space surrounding them. Negative space is the empty space around the objects within the composition. It becomes an important part of the composition because it helps define the shapes within the image. If you have another look at the photos on the previous spread, you'll see that there is a strong sense of space around the images. The space helps define the shapes inside the composition.

The square image on this spread uses all these qualities. The Chinese character makes a strong shape, reinforced by the dark negative space around it. The composition is very simple. It's also subtle – I've let the natural light and tonal contrast between the metallic figure and the background create the image.



*Jing'an Temple, Shanghai, China
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens, 1/180 second @ f9.5, ISO 800*

"Composition is the strongest way of seeing."

- Edward Weston

If you're starting out in photography, it's natural to search for rules or a strong guide to the way you should be doing things. I'm sure that's why the rule of thirds is so popular – it serves as a reminder that composition is often improved by placing your subject off-centre. But as your understanding and experience increase, you'll realise that the reality is that there are no rules, only guidelines. You can start playing around and having fun with new techniques and ideas. Try things and see if they work. Be creative, and enjoy yourself. Photography should be about having fun, and finding interesting ways to express yourself. It's an art form (or craft, depending on how you look at it), not a tax return. The time for sticking to rules is when you're filling out your tax return, not when you're taking photos.



Black & white

As we've seen already, square photos lend themselves to simple composition – if you look at the work of fine art photographers that use the square format, you'll notice that the composition of their images is often very restrained. There is nothing complex going on in terms of design.

Another way of thinking about simplicity is to use the word minimalism. Good composition is about what you leave out of your photos as much as what you put it.

Black and white photography is another technique for simplifying your photos. By eliminating colour, black and white concentrates attention on the basic visual elements, or building blocks, of the photographic image. These elements include shape, form, texture, line, negative space and tonal contrast.

Black and white can also be extremely subtle. I have images that I originally saw and processed in colour. Colour is an important part of the composition. But I also created a black and white version, and found that I didn't initially like the black and white version as much as the colour one, but that it grew on me and after a few weeks or months I found myself preferring the black and white one. That demonstrates to me the subtlety and staying power of black and white.

As you concentrate on simplifying your photos, using minimal compositions, and using shapes within your photos, not to mention converting to black and white, you will find yourself becoming more aware of these things. This is part of the process of learning to see – and you will also benefit from this when you go back to the rectangular 35mm aspect ratio.



Abbey, Auckland

Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens, 1/350 second @ f2, ISO 200

There are a couple of fine art photographers who produce beautiful work in black and white in the square format. They are [Michael Levin](#) and [Michael Kenna](#). I recommend that you take a look at their websites and their wonderful collections of photos. Their work is inspirational, but you can also learn a lot by looking at the way they compose their images. Look for the four S's of composition – shape, simplicity, space and subtlety.

Also look at the way they use tonal contrast. They are both clever at placing dark subjects on light backgrounds, or light subjects on dark backgrounds. This is a technique I use a lot within my black and white photos and I also try and do this with my colour work too. By the way, speaking of colour, take a look at the work of [Jessica Hilltout](#) – it's a masterclass in colour design within the square format.



Colour or black and white – which do you prefer? For me, the colour image has more impact but the black and white version has more power, subtlety and staying power. Black and white also suits the square format well because of its fine art aesthetic.



Case study

Matt Toynbee

My main camera these days is a late production Pentacon Six TL. It's a fully manual square format film camera with no light meter, just a shutter speed dial and a timer. It's been described as an SLR on steroids, which is a pretty accurate description. It has an all metal construction and is much larger than an EOS 5D Mark II.

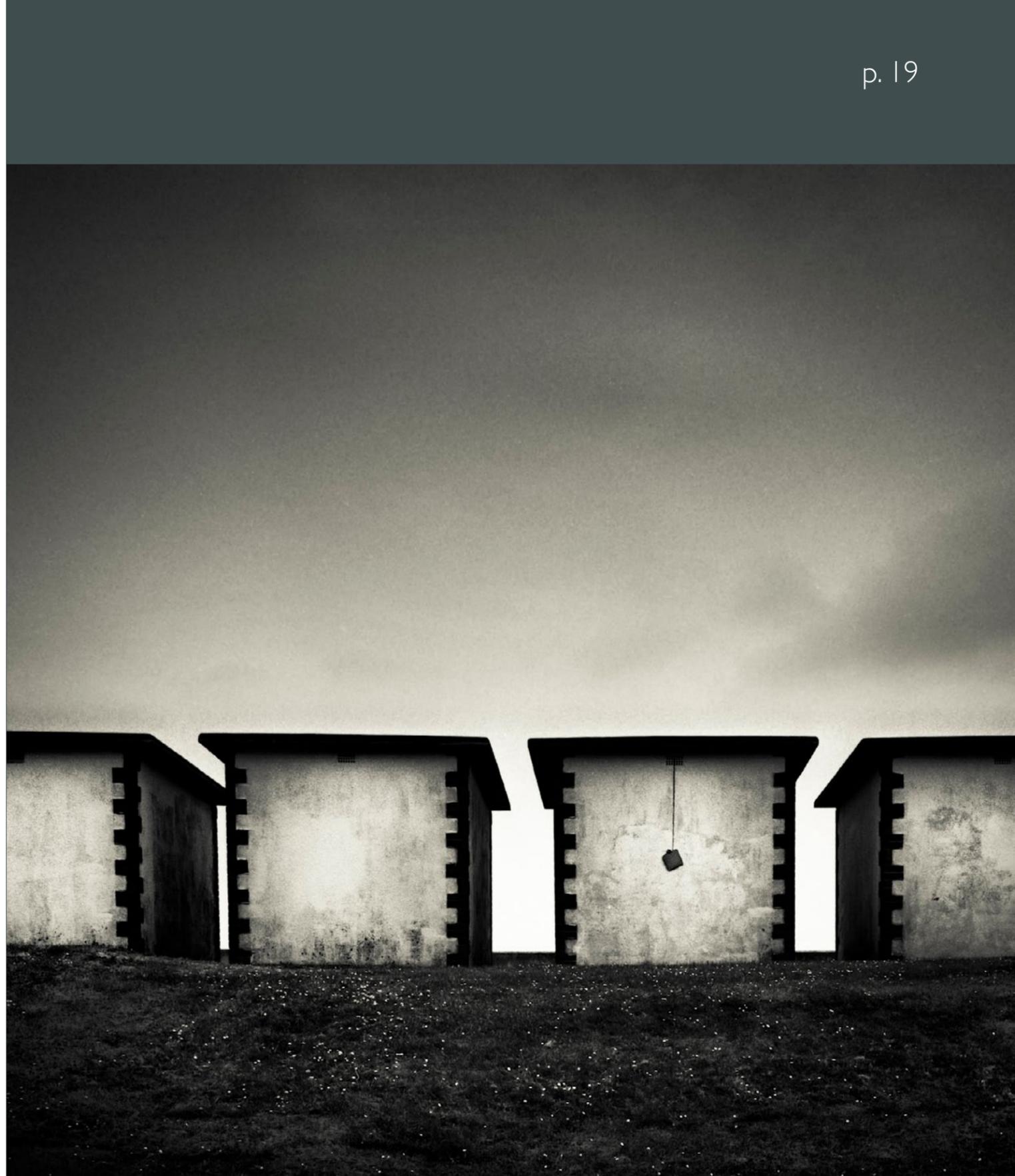
I love the process of using the Pentacon Six; because it is completely manual / am responsible for every element of getting the shot right. Unlike using digital cameras, I have to learn how to adjust for different light conditions using an analogue handheld meter.

I mostly use my much loved Carl Zeiss 50mm Jena Flektogon lens. The lens produces stunningly sharp images, and is a real pleasure to use.

Other than that I have a Zerolmage Zero2000 pinhole camera, the basic model with just the sliding cover for the pinhole. I use the pinhole to remind myself what photography is, capturing light. It also means I can concentrate on composition and exposure and not worry about focal length, aperture and other settings.

Using film

When I started taking photography seriously a few years ago I chose digital. After two years I felt like I knew very little about photography. I could select the aperture, compose and squeeze the shutter button and I could use a computer to process the shot but I felt like I was cheating. I started shooting 35mm black and white film and I loved the results. From then on it wasn't long before I totally switched to analogue format completely, developing my own films and embracing medium square format.



When shooting with film and manual cameras I am forced to learn about exposure and lighting conditions, metering shadows, learning about how bright and dark I want the photo to be – in advance. This teaches me to think more about what I am shooting and improves my experience as a photographer quickly. I also like the fact that medium format film can produce huge prints, much larger than 35mm or an equivalent digital SLR can handle. Plus film cameras can be very economical, especially as lenses are often available at a fraction of the price of digital auto-focus lenses.

I have learnt a lot from using film and I am still loving the journey. However I do see the benefit of digital photography especially the flexibility when shooting events such as parties and weddings. A decent low-noise digital sensor can be so useful for low light conditions. Although I like the anticipation of waiting for films to be developed before I can view them, I also like the convenience of seeing if I managed to get the shot I wanted. With film you have to rely on your knowledge and confidence that you nailed the shot – pretty tricky to do.

I think one day I will go back to digital but I will never give up film completely, it has been the best way to improve my photography skills and make me work like a real photographer.

I'd love to have the room to print photos in a darkroom and one day I intend to. In the meantime I develop films in my bathroom and scan them digitally. I find the TIFF format to be superb for post-processing however it will only work if I have nailed the exposure – if I make a small mistake with exposure it is more difficult to get the shot to work. Another example of how film can be a cruel master, it will not allow mistakes - unlike digital.



*Herne Bay, UK
Pentacon Six TL, 50mm Jena Flektogon lens*

Square format photography

Squares are a strong shape and they keep the viewer within a defined space. There are not many photographs that do not suit the square format, in my opinion. Quite often with 3:2 35mm aspect ratio images, the edges of the shot can be superfluous and by cropping I can focus on the subject or details better. I think many photographers use the sides of a rectangular image to let their subject 'breathe'. But often they dilute the impact of the shots. It also helps for viewing photos on the internet, the square format is displayed larger when viewed on a website whereas panoramic shots appear very small.

Squares work great with symmetry and centring. With landscape ratios the rule of thirds is used to create a non-centred composition, which can make the photograph more interesting to the viewer. However I believe this is less relevant in the square format, allowing the photographer to break the rules and place the subject in the centre of the frame. I also think that you can play around with the placement of off-centre subjects without worrying about thirds too much; abstractly positioned objects in tight corners can work brilliantly within a square.

Using the square format has changed the way I compose photos and more importantly how I approach locations. I will often look for strong symmetrical shapes within architecture, or light patterns and aim to work the rest of the scene around that shape. For example, if shooting crowded areas I try to remove the people from the scene and concentrate on lines of buildings or shadow lines, then build people and things back into the scene - trying not to overcomplicate the scene too much.

Looking back at my square format film work, I think I have produced better compositions than when I have used 35mm and cropped it afterwards. When I was using 35mm film or my digital SLR I would not always think about the crop while I was taking the photos, and afterwards I often found that the crop was too tight as a square – if I had composed for a square in the first place then the composition would have been better.



*Dungeness, UK
Pentacon Six TL, 50mm Jena Flektogon lens*

Black and white

Colour can be very distracting and subjective. People have favourite colours and are drawn to colours in different ways, not to mention those who are affected by colour-blindness. For this reason each person will view a colour photo subjectively. Black and white photography concentrates on light and tones, something we all see the same way and are the building blocks of how we see the world. With this in mind, the black and white photographer can better control what he or she wants the viewer to see.

Black and white artists apply tonal range to create strikingly beautiful monochrome images - using highlights to accentuate their subject and graduations to blend light and dark tones. They say Ansel Adams saw colour as tones and I think there is a lot to be learned by this approach. I will often use a red filter to brighten shingle beaches and darken blue skies and by controlling light entering the camera the end result produces a finer quality photograph than post-processing a colour image. It also forces me to review a scene first, and envisage what I want the final shot to look like. After all it is my interpretation of scene that I want people to see.

The only diversion from black and white is my split toned work. I sometimes use split toning to assign warm and cool hues to enhance variations in tone. To me this is a nice compromise between colour and monochrome, I can assign subtle tones to highlights and shadows without distracting the viewer from the main subjects of the photograph.

You can visit Matt Toynbee's website at MatthewToynbee.net



Vertoramas

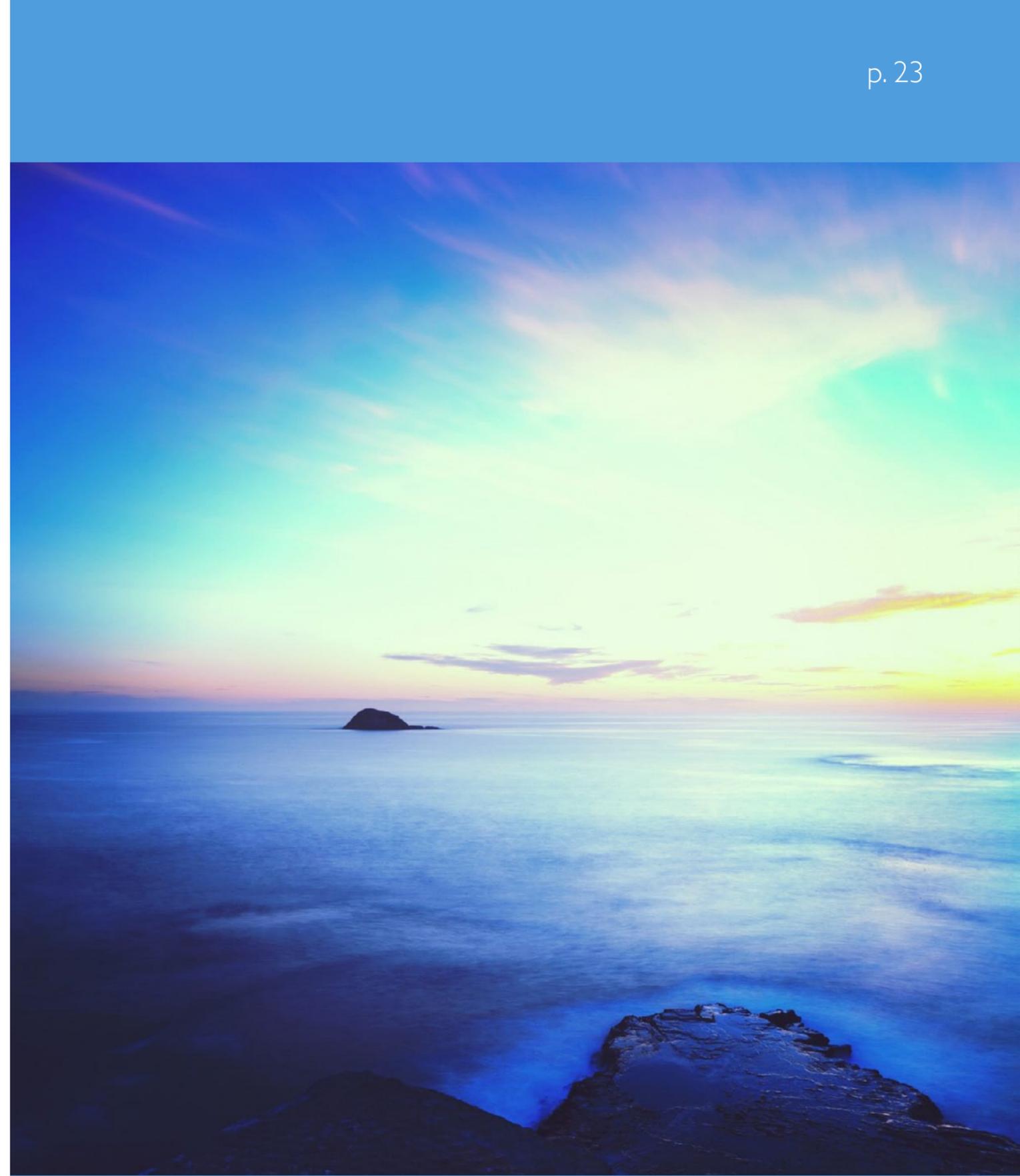
One way of creating a square image is to take two rectangular photos with the aim of stitching them together afterwards. This is easiest if you have a tilt-shift lens as you can use the shift movements to take two photos that align perfectly. But you can also do it with regular lenses, as long as you are prepared to do some Photoshop work and crop the blended photos to create a square image.

This technique works well with subjects like seascapes where it is easy to join two photos, and has the benefit of giving you a larger image to work with, as it is made from a combination of two files. This is a benefit if you intend to make large prints, or if you have an older camera with a relatively low megapixel count.

I created the square photo on this page by joining two rectangular images together. I mounted the camera on a tripod, took one photo, then swivelled the camera upwards so that there was some overlap, and took another. It was then fairly simple to merge the two together in Photoshop. This type of image is called a vertical panorama – or vertorama (search this term on Flickr to see plenty of examples).

Another benefit of this technique is that it imitates the effect of shooting with an ultra-wide angle lens. The two photos that make up my vertorama were taken with a zoom lens set to a focal length of 33mm. If I had taken a single photo that contained the same view I would have needed an ultra wide angle lens to get it all in.

There's a Photoshop tutorial showing how I created this image on page 47.



A creative edge

You can give your square photos a real lift by adding a black border. I added the black border to the photo on this spread using Instagram. Another technique I employ is to use a black border that originally came from a black and white print that I made years ago. I scanned the print on a flatbed scanner, and then deleted the photo, leaving the black border against a white background. This border is easy to re-size in Photoshop and add to any of my photos. It also has the benefit of being unique to me – no-one else has a black border that's exactly the same. The tutorial on page 51 shows you how to add this border to your photos in Photoshop.

Alternatively, if you have negatives, you can do the same with them. Scan the negative, delete the photo and use the rebate as a border. The negative doesn't have to be square as you can resize the border to fit your photos.

"There are always two people in every picture: the photographer and the viewer."

- Ansel Adams



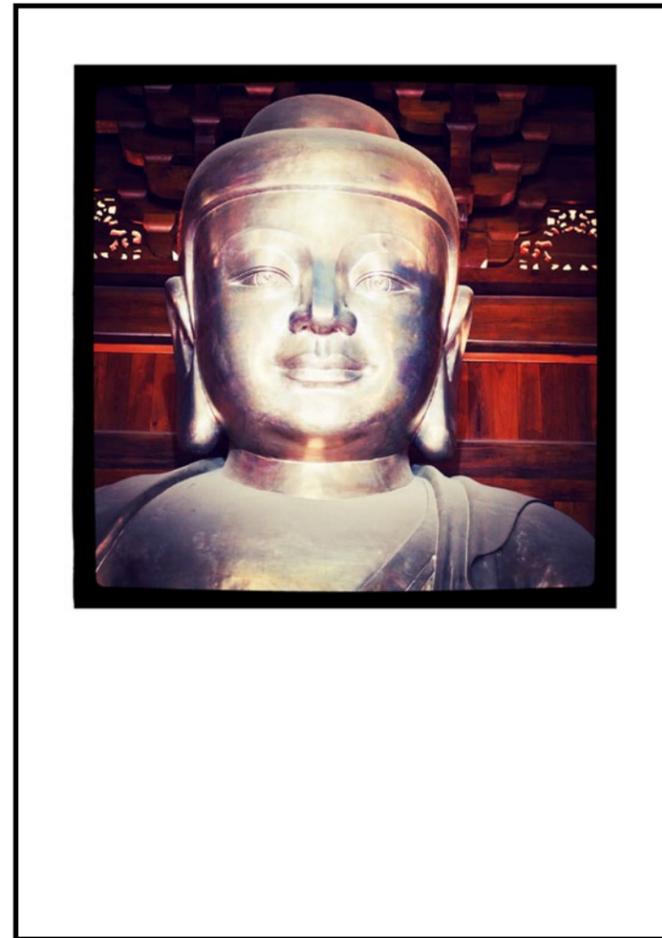
*Dongtai Road Antiques Market, Shanghai, China
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens, 1/180 second @ f5.6, ISO 1600*

Framing

Printing and framing is a rewarding way of presenting your photos, especially if you are like me and take photos which could be described as fine art .

There are two ways to present a single square image within a frame. The first is to place it centrally within the sheet of paper that you are printing on. Alternately you can use a technique called bottom-weighting. With this method you place the photo on the paper in such a way that the top margin is equal in size to the left and right margins. This places the photo near the top of the paper and leaves a large margin at the bottom – a technique commonly seen in galleries. Either way is fine, it's just a matter of taste.

The examples on the right show these methods in action. The third image reveals the area that an uncropped 35mm photo would take up within the frame (grey). As you can see, you are not actually losing any image quality by cropping to a square. The photo is still the same width, it's just that the top and bottom have been cropped off.



There is a practical consideration when you it comes to cropping digital images. Your camera has a certain amount of megapixels, and if you crop the photo a square then you'll lose up to a third of them. I understand that you may be reluctant to do this – after all you paid good money for your camera and naturally you want to utilise every available pixel that the sensor offers. But this is not an issue now as much as it would have been a few years ago, when cameras had less megapixels. If your camera has ten or more megapixels, you don't need to worry about cropping some of them off (unless you intend to print them at sizes larger than A3). If you have a camera with 20 or more megapixels, then you almost certainly have more than you will ever need for most purposes. You can crop without worrying about the pixels you lose.

Creative layout

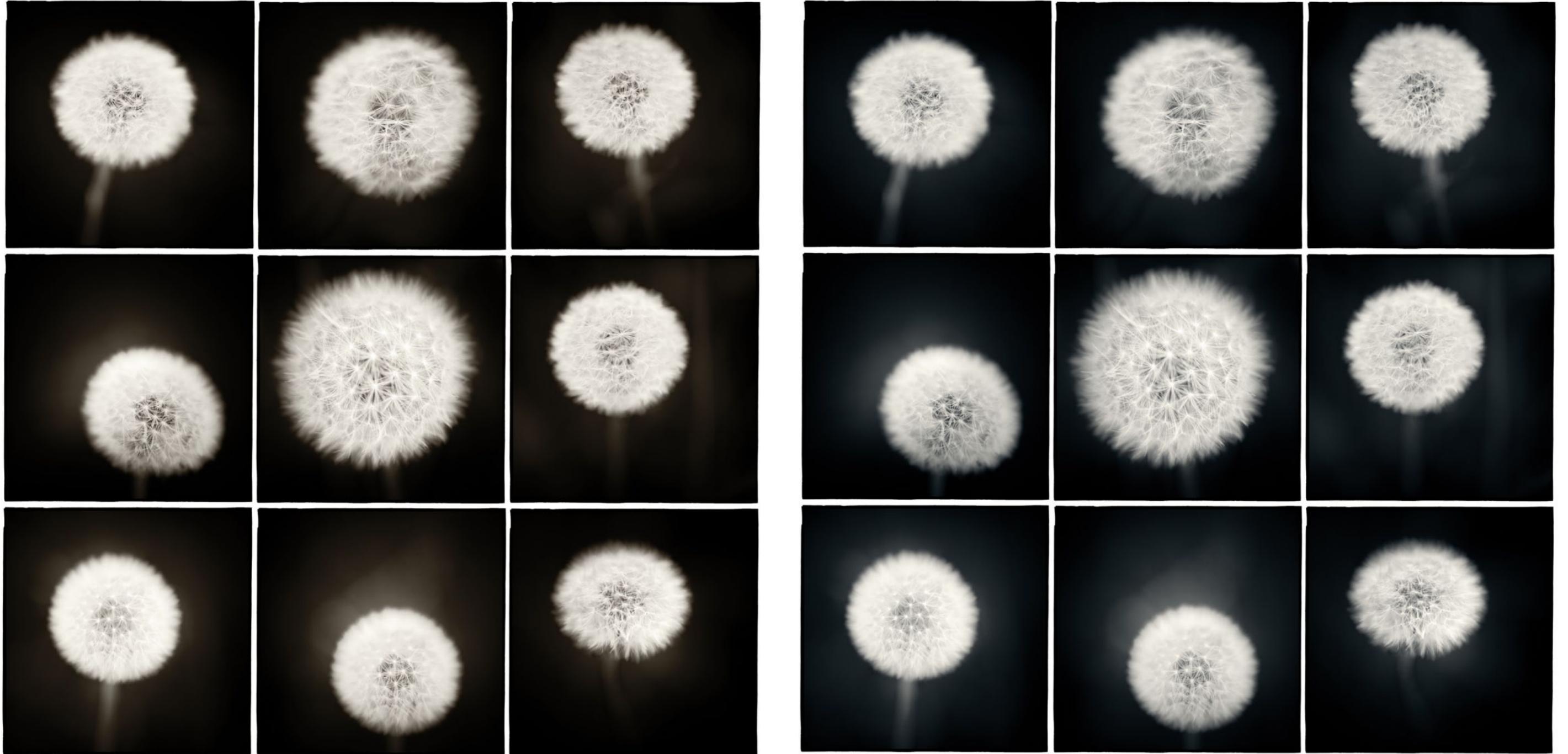
It's time to get creative with layout. Think outside the box – or at least outside the square image. I made a montage out of nine photos I made of dandelions. They work well together because there's a unifying theme: the subject (dandelions), the technique (an 85mm lens fitted with a close-up lens, narrow depth of field) and colour (similar processing for each image in Lightroom). I also converted it to black and white and toned it sepia and another version split blue/copper. You can see these versions on the next page.

"In photography there is a reality so subtle that it becomes more real than reality."

- Alfred Stieglitz

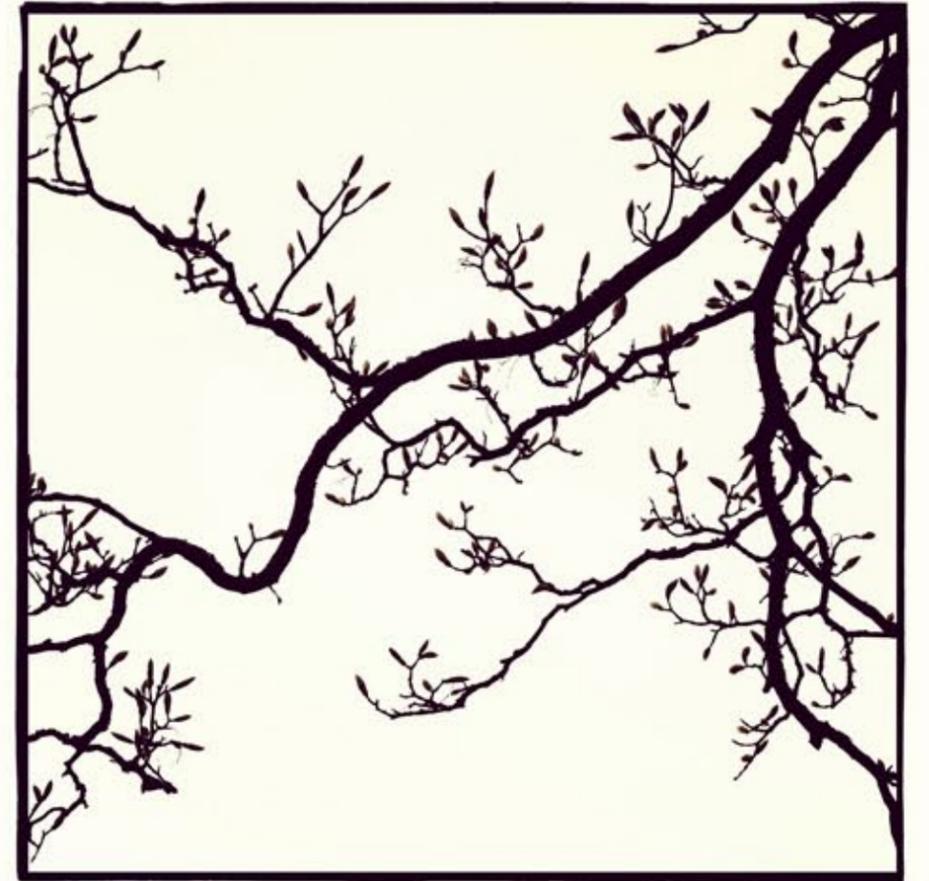


*Dandelion, Tackley, UK
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens*



*Dandelion, Tackley, UK
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens*

Diptyches & triptyches

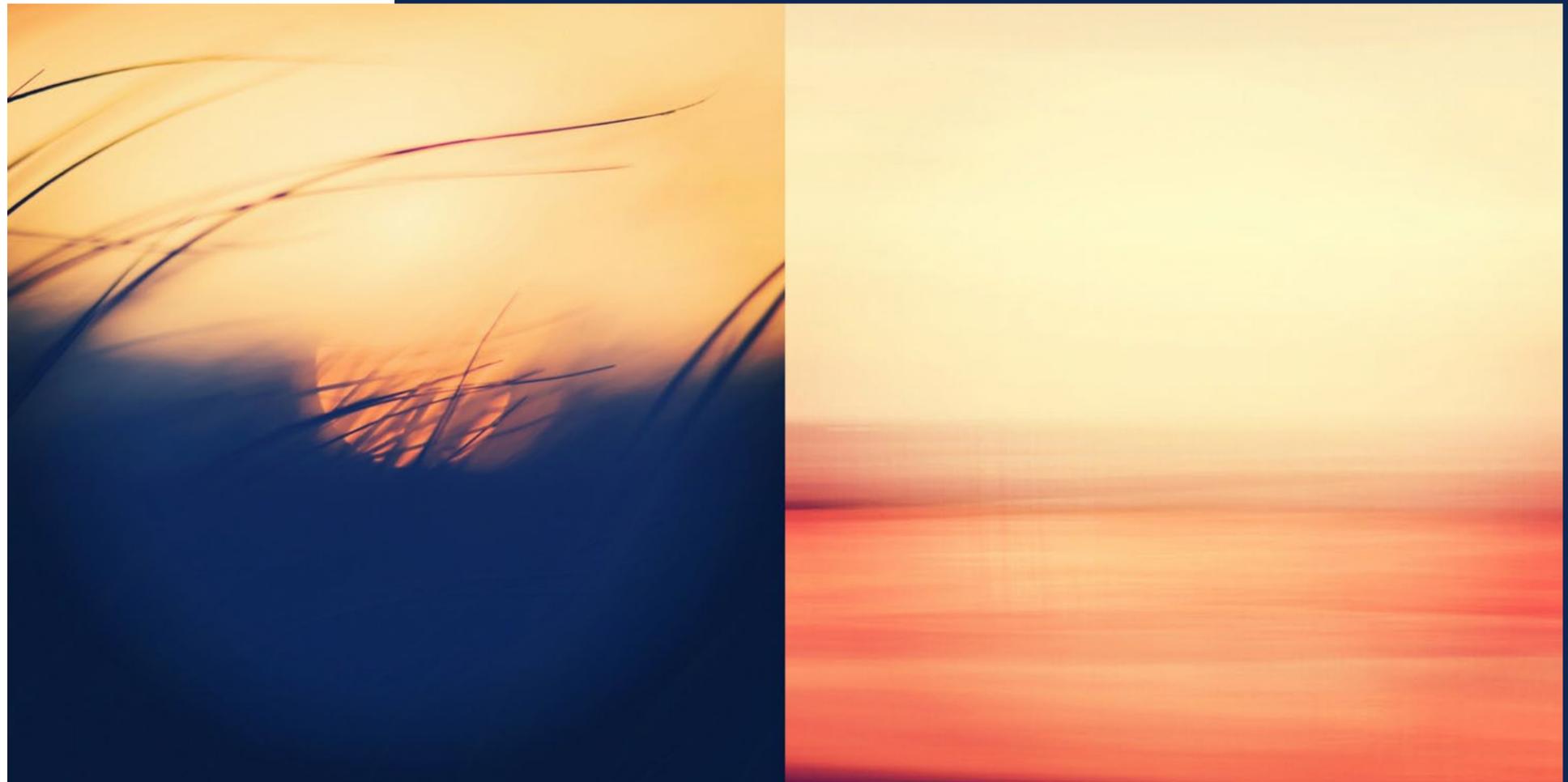


Another way of presenting photos is to put them together as a diptych or a triptych. There are a number of ways you can do this. One is join two or three photos together to make one file. This is a good way to create diptyches or triptyches that are easy to print out in one go or display on the internet.

If you're creating art for the wall, another option is to print out the photos and put them together within the same frame underneath mounting board (with holes cut out for the photos), either horizontally or vertically. Or you can frame two or three photos separately and hang them closely together. You could also have the photos printed onto canvas – a nice way of doing things if you like photos without frames.

An alternative to making prints is to create a book using a print on demand service like Blurb – if you have put two photos opposite each other on either side of a spread you really have a diptych. I like photo books – for me they are the modern equivalent of a photo album. A well made photo book can be handed down through the generations, and feels far more permanent to me than a website or hard drive.

How do you decide which photos work together? It's partly of matter of feel – start by putting some photos next to each other and see if the combinations work. Look for visual elements that link the photos. For instance, it could be two black and white photos toned the same way. Perhaps the subject matter is similar (such as in the examples on this page), or there is a link in the composition, the shapes within the



photos, or the treatment of each photo. If you're pairing up colour photos, try combinations with similar colours (or the opposite, contrasting colours) to see what happens.

Perhaps the photos are part of a set. If you're working on a photo story, or a set of seascapes, or with portraits of the same person, there are bound to be images that work together in sets of two or three.

*Bethell's Beach, New Zealand
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens*

Instagram

There's a bit of a craze at the moment for taking photos with iPhones or other smart phones and processing them with apps such as Instagram. It's not difficult to see why this is popular. Most people carry their phones around with them all the time, which means they always have a camera with them. If something catches your eye you can take a photo – and process it with an app and even upload it to Flickr or Facebook and other photo sharing websites. If digital cameras have expanded the reach and popularity of photography, then perhaps camera phones will one day bring photography to just about every human being on the planet.

Part of the success of apps like Instagram is that they make photos look good. You can play with a variety of special effects and enjoy yourself. There are no rules – if it looks good, and you like it, that's all that matters.

The photo on the right wasn't taken on an iPhone. I took it with my EOS 5D Mark II, cropped it to the square format, uploaded it to my iPad, then processed it with the Instagram app (which works on an iPad as well as an iPhone). The advantage of this method is that I always have the original high resolution Raw file and the option of editing it anyway I chose. I can make a 'straight' colour image, that can be used as a stock photo or to illustrate a magazine article. I can convert it to black and white, make a large print from it, or run it through an app like Instagram as I did here.

Beware of using apps like Instagram as to compensate for poor composition or technique. It's tempting, and way too easy, to improve poorly taken photos by running them through a post-processing technique that adds a texture or colour shift that



La Plata, Argentina

Canon EOS 40D, 17-40mm lens @ 32mm, 1/160 second @ f7.1, ISO 200

seems to magically improve the image. The reality is that there is no magic wand. Post-processing should be used to enhance an already good image, not to hide a poorly taken photo under a creative filter of some sort. Trust me, it's all too easy to see when someone is doing this. To me, Instagram is just another post-processing option. More than anything it's a bit of fun – sharp-eyed readers may have spotted that many of the photos in this ebook have been processed with the Instagram app.

It intrigues me that the Instagram app crops to the square format. I like the idea, and it's more evidence of the resurgence in popularity of the square format. If you have an iPhone, iPod touch or iPad, I recommend you try out the Instagram app. It's free, and your processed photos are uploaded to the Instagram social networking site. Like Flickr, you can browse other people's images and follow your favourite photographers.

"A portrait is not made in the camera but on either side of it."

- Edward Steichen



*Abbey, Auckland, New Zealand
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 85mm lens, 1/180 second @ f2.8, ISO 400*

Holga lenses

I wrote about Holga cameras earlier in the ebook. For photographers who like the Holga look but use digital cameras, the only option until recently was to adapt an existing Holga lens. This involves some DIY and is not for everybody. But now you can buy plastic Holga lenses in a variety of camera mounts and focal lengths from [Holga Direct](#), and use them with your digital camera right away.

Holga lenses, as you might expect from an inexpensive plastic optic, don't have autofocus. Instead, there are diagrams to indicate focusing distance points. The lenses have a fixed aperture of f8, and unless you're shooting in bright sunlight that means you may have to use ISO settings in the region of 1600-3200 in order to hand-hold the camera and avoid camera shake. It also means the camera's viewfinder is quite dark (it took me a while to get used to it).

I find that the images straight out of the camera are quite flat and as a result I've increased the contrast a lot in post-processing. I think the flatness is just a natural result of the softness of the lens diffusing the light that passes through it. My photos were taken on an overcast day, and this will be less of an issue in sunny conditions.

Strong, simple compositions like the one on this page work the best. I like to place the subject in the centre of the frame, as that's where the best image quality is, and I crop to the square format at the post-processing stage.

One benefit of using a Holga lens, even on a digital camera, is that it brings an element of simplicity to your set up. There's no zoom, so you have to move closer to (or further



*Auckland, New Zealand
Canon EOS 40D, Holga HT-C 60mm lens, 1/180 second, ISO 400*

from) your subject to change its size in the frame. You can't change the aperture, so you can put your camera in program or aperture priority mode, set an appropriate ISO, and let your camera take care of the settings (it's easy to dial in exposure compensation on a digital SLR if you need it). It's a bit like using a compact camera, or a Holga camera but with more control. It encourages you to forget thinking about your camera settings and concentrate on seeing and creating strong images.

The Holga lens is also good for black and white photography. There are quite a few film photographers who use black and white rollfilm in Holga cameras and produce some stunning images. By using a Holga lens on a digital camera you get the benefits and convenience we've already discussed. You don't have to buy, process and scan film, you can use the Raw format if you want to and it's easy to process your photos extensively in Lightroom or Photoshop.

"Photography helps people to see."

- Berenice Abbott



Case study

Flavia Schaller



For my square photographs, I work with a Mamiya C3, a Rolleiflex, both being TLR (Twin Lens Reflex); and a Holga. I've started in photography with the Rolleiflex, but as soon as I got the Mamiya in my hands it began to be my favourite. The ability to change lenses and to focus closer makes it more versatile and suitable for the way I like to work.

Holga

The Holga camera changed my life! Before I had the Holga, I didn't feel safe walking around the city with a camera

and tripod in my hands, besides the fact that I have a painful back problem and being lightweight is an important feature. To be able to carry a camera in my purse and take it anywhere without worries is a blessing.

I know the Holga is considered a toy camera for many, being cheap and made of plastic, but I don't see it that way. Of course, I change my approach a little, because the Holga lens has some artifacts that have a big impact on the final image, so I have to treat them as part of the composition. The soft focus and vignette really makes some objects stand out and adds a dreamy atmosphere that I love, but it can work against a very detailed or structured subject. The Holga image tends to drive the eyes to the centre, so I try to choose a scene where the centre will be the focus of attention.



Salvador, Brazil
Holga

Film photography

The films I use are Fuji Acros 100 and Ilford FP4. I like using film because I enjoy the entire process that it involves. The direct contact with the material, the chemicals, the waiting. I like the negative as an object and the fact that my originals are printed in a physical thing. It may be silly, but I like it. One more reason is that I'm fascinated about the old times and it makes me feel closer to them. I can pretend I'm in 1930 processing my glass negatives.

If my photos are going to be seen in a computer screen, I scan them and process them in Photoshop exactly (or very close) as I want them to be printed. Otherwise, I print them in the darkroom. Rare exceptions.

How would I compare film and digital? I think it's not much about the cameras. One thing is the freedom and possibilities that a digital camera gives. And it makes a big difference when you don't have much money. With a digital camera you can practice and experiment without worrying about wasting film.

But I think the biggest difference is with the people who use them. I can post-process my scans the same way people do with digital, but I insist on using film today because I also like the old feel. In some way I think I'm violating something if I change my images too much with software. If I had to shoot with digital, it would be the same. Some people grew up with digital cameras, others have a kind of cultural baggage they bring to it, be it from photojournalism or from fine art, that translates into different aesthetics. So, for me it's mostly cultural.



*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Holga*

Composition

I like the square format, because I don't have to turn the camera. I'm just kidding (but, not much). I started photography with my Rolleiflex 6x6 and I think that has something to do with my preference for the square format.

I'm also attracted to symmetry and the square form is so perfect for that. Some photography rules can be beautifully broken with the square format. There are no tendencies, no correct orientation, and no bias in any particular direction.

As the observer, you can start looking right at the center or any particular point that grabs your attention and then start to explore what's all around it, or you can just see the image as a whole block. There are no sections, the subject is unified. You have more freedom to compose the image. It's the perfect frame.

Black & white

I like to emphasize the shapes and textures of the subject. I like the subject to "speak" for itself, telling a story and setting a mood. Colour causes a distraction from that because it "speaks" louder and comes first. But, I recognize that some subjects work better with colour, while others wouldn't have a chance (and the same can be said for black and white). I notice that even when I work with colour today, I tend to use a soft and limited palette. To work with the variations of contrast and tones is what I like most.

Another reason why I love black and white photography is that it creates the nostalgic and mysterious atmosphere that I want to capture in my images.

You can visit **Flavia Schaller's website at flaviaschaller.com**



*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Mamiya C3*



*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Rolleiflex*



*Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Mamiya C3*

Conclusion

I hope this ebook inspires you to try the square format, and to think more about the process of composition and image making as you do so. Whichever aspect ratio you use for the majority of your photos, the exercise will help improve your eye for composition and subject.

Square is just one of many ebooks I've written about photography. The others are listed on my website at www.andrewsgibson.com/blog/photography-ebooks-2/ (just click the link to go straight to the page) and cover topics as diverse as composition, exposure and post-processing in Lightroom. You can even download a couple of complementary ebooks by joining my free newsletter here: www.andrewsgibson.com/blog/the-creative-image/.

If you have any feedback on this ebook I'd love to hear from you. I enjoy connecting with my readers and you can find me at my blog and the websites listed below.

Andrew S. Gibson

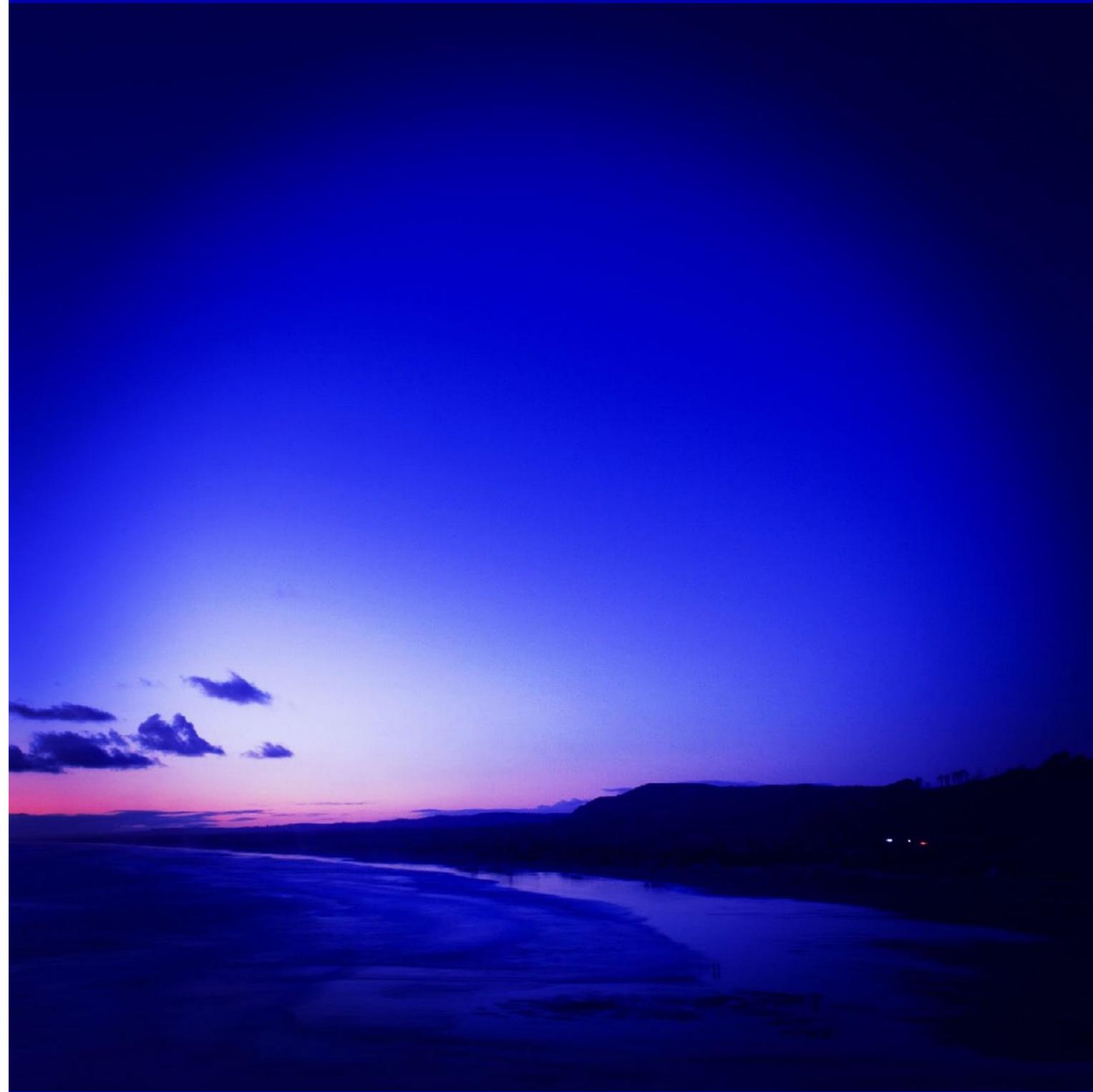
andrewsgibson.com/blog

facebook.com/andrewsgibson

twitter.com/andrewsgibson

500px.com/andrewsgibson

flickr.com/magicalplaces

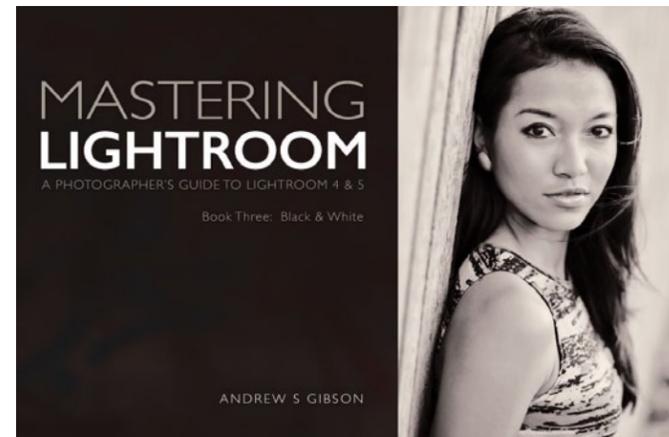


Muriwai, New Zealand

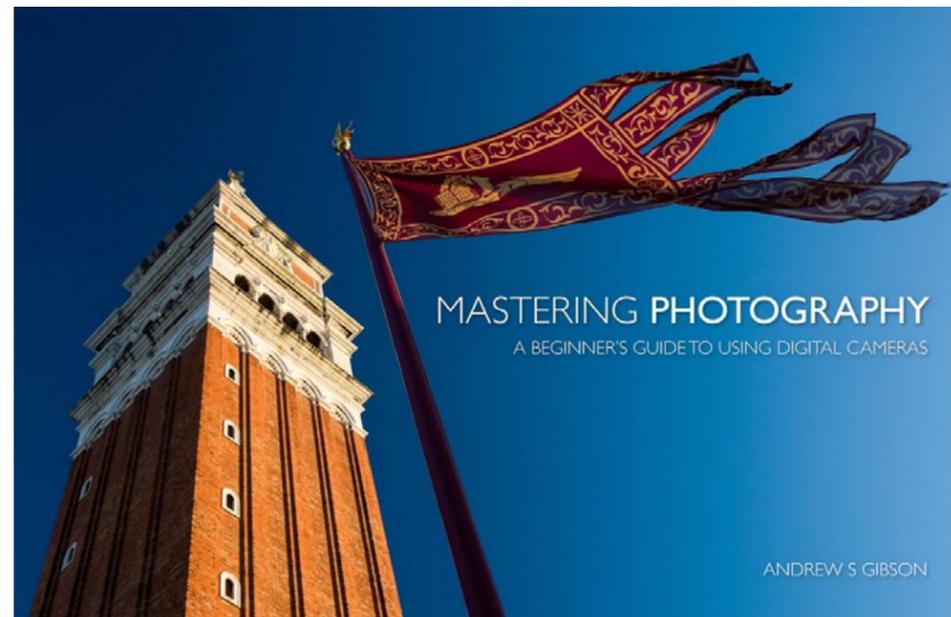
Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 17-40mm lens @ 18mm, 6 seconds @ f16, ISO 100

Click on the links (in red) to learn more about the ebooks on my personal website.

Photography ebooks

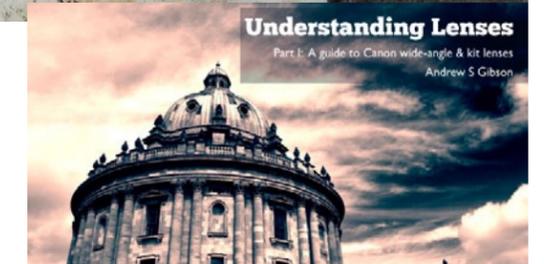
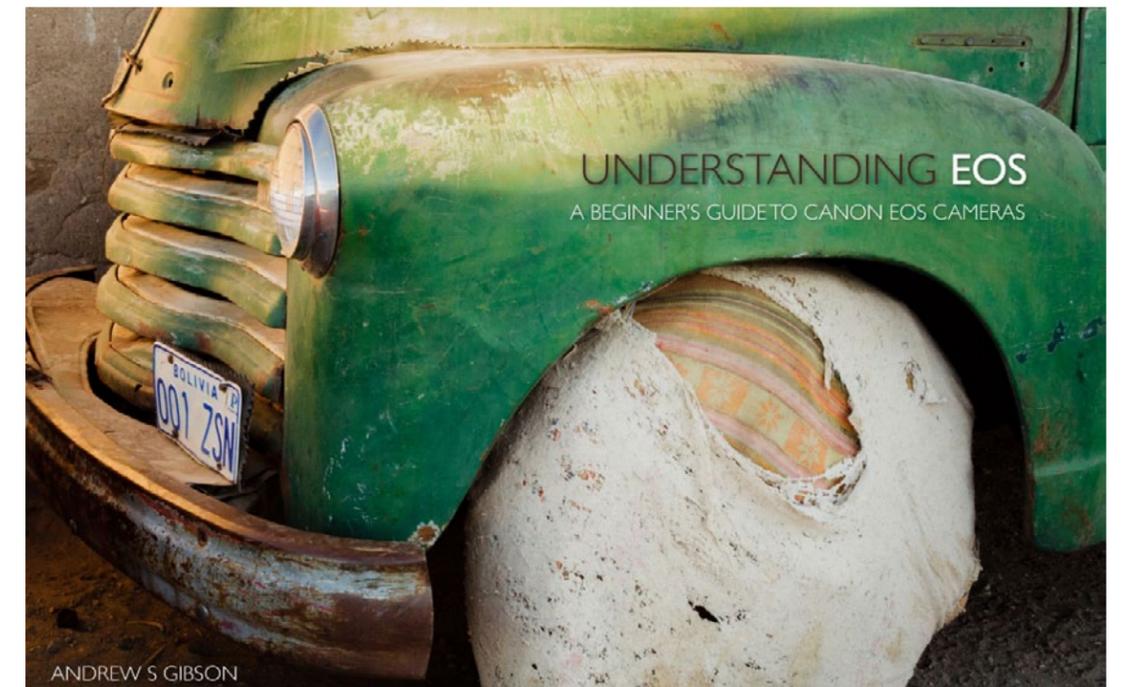


Learn how to use Lightroom with my *Mastering Lightroom* series of ebooks.



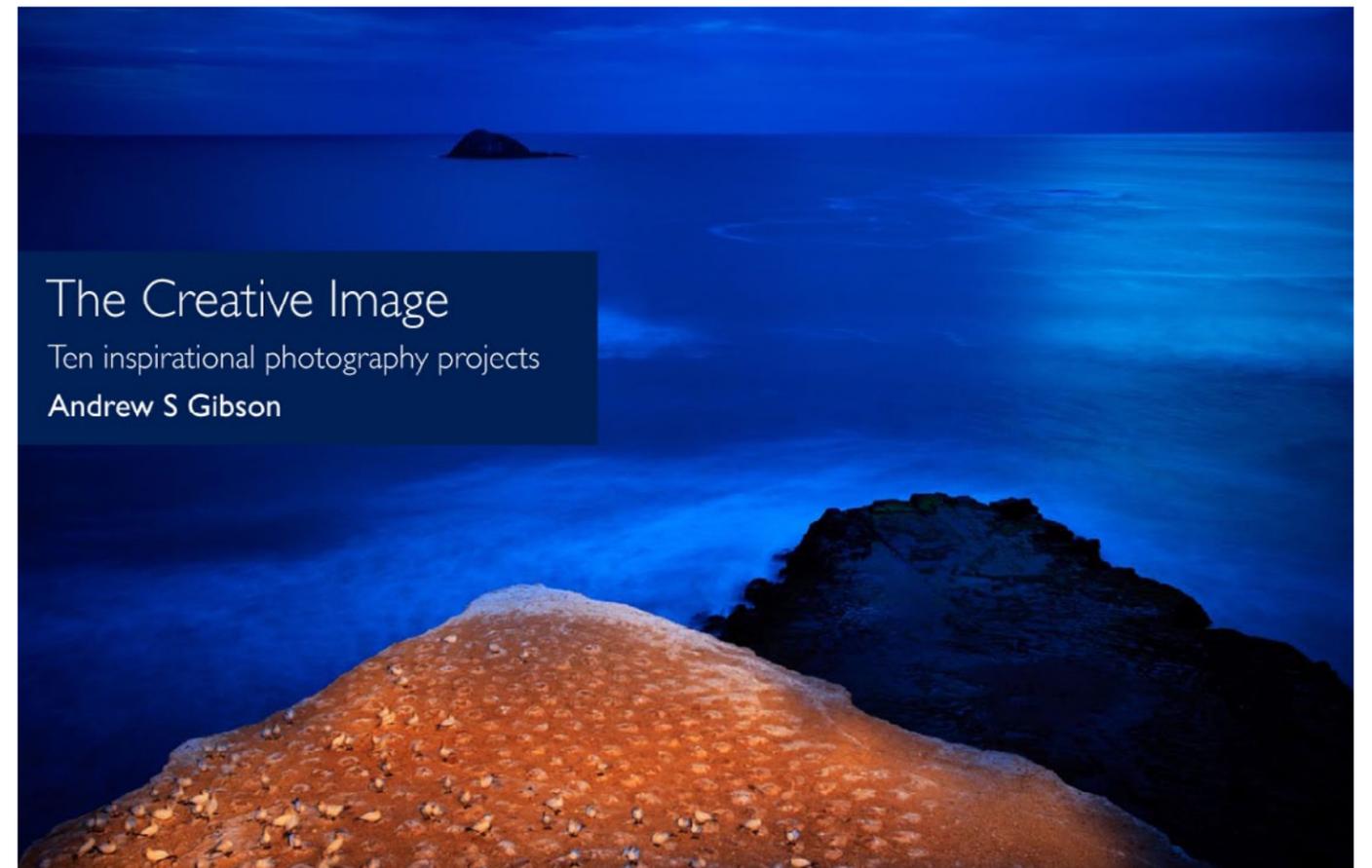
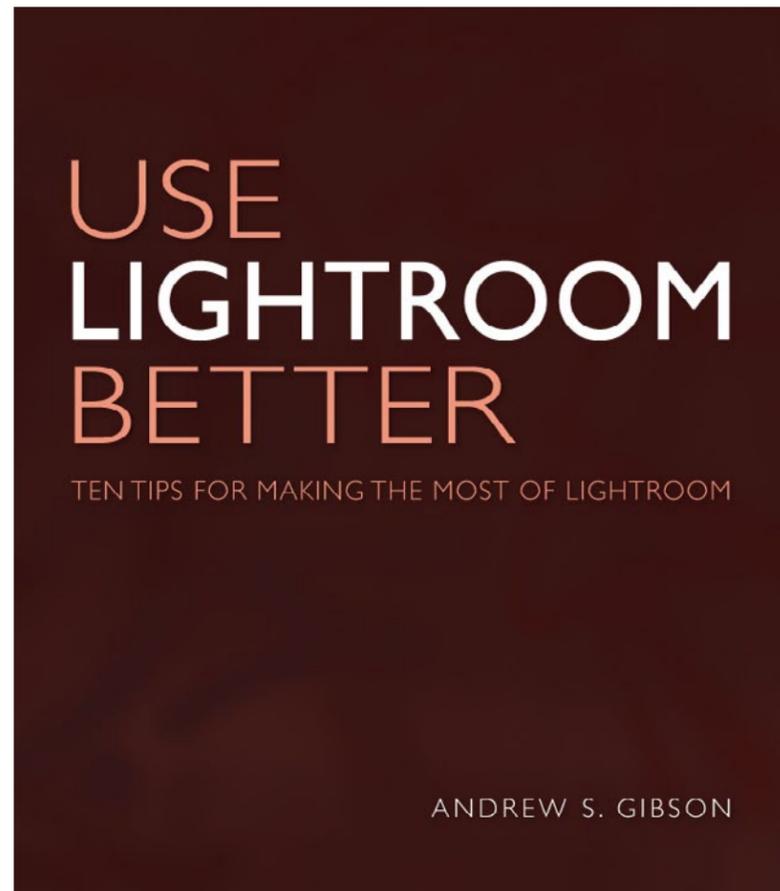
Learn how to take control of your camera and create beautiful photos with *Mastering Photography*.

Learn how to use your EOS camera with my *Understanding EOS* series of ebooks.



Free photography ebooks

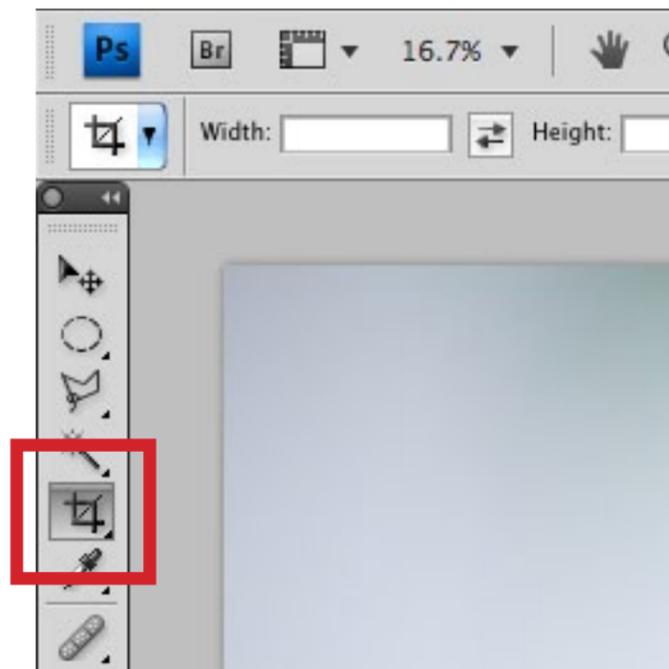
Receive complementary copies of *The Creative Image* and *Use Lightroom Better* when you join my free newsletter here: www.andrewsgibson.com/blog/the-creative-image/.



Appendix A: Cropping

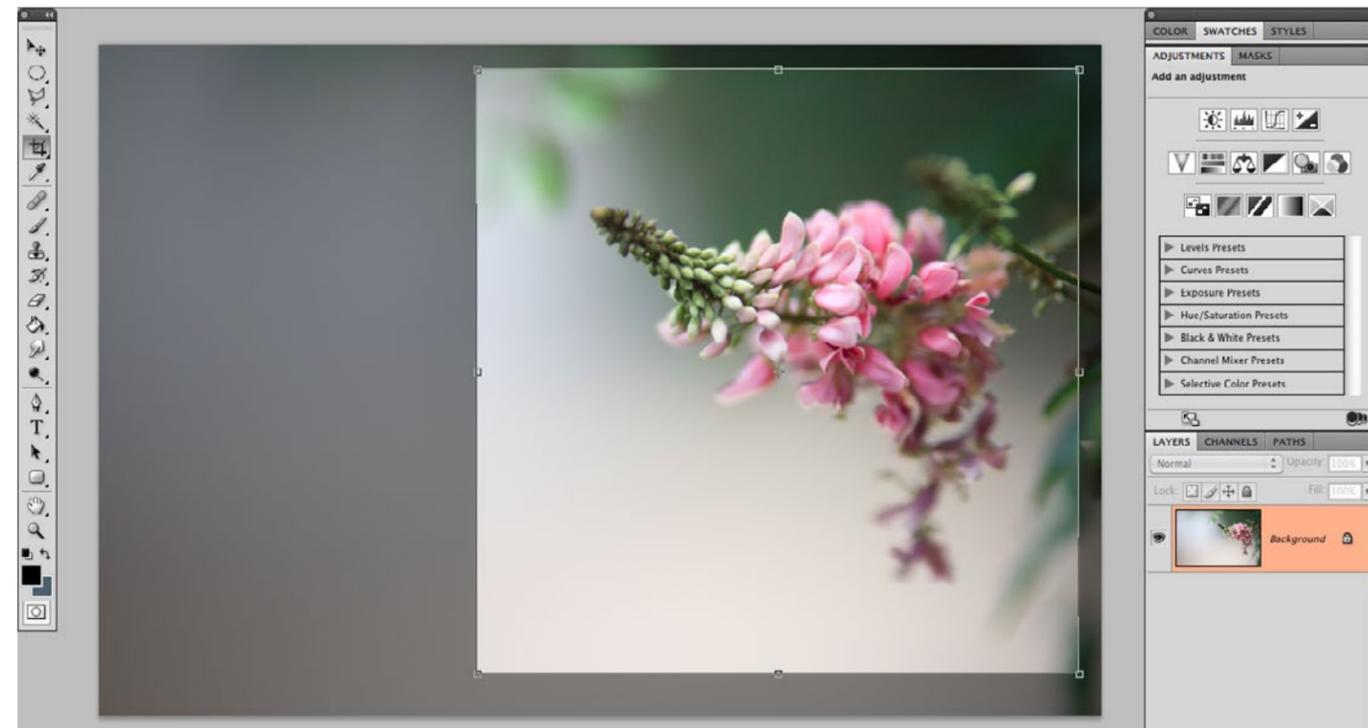
Photoshop CS

Method One: quick and easy.



1. ▲

Select the **Crop Tool** from the Tools palette.



2. ▲

Use the mouse to draw a square over the photo. Hold down the **Shift** key while you do it so that Photoshop keeps the sides equal in length, otherwise you will end up with a rectangle.

When you release the mouse, the cropped part of the photo is shown in grey. Click and drag with the mouse to move the square around the photo. You can make it smaller or bigger by holding down the **Shift** key and dragging the corners.

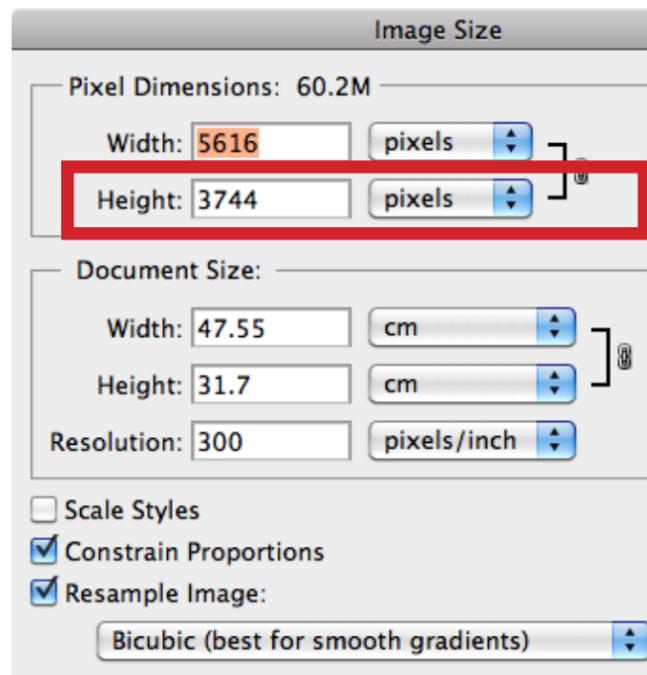
Press **Return** when to complete the crop, or **Escape** to exit without making changes.

Tip: Save your cropped images under a new name, so that you don't overwrite the originals. That way you won't lose them if you need them in the future.

Photoshop CS

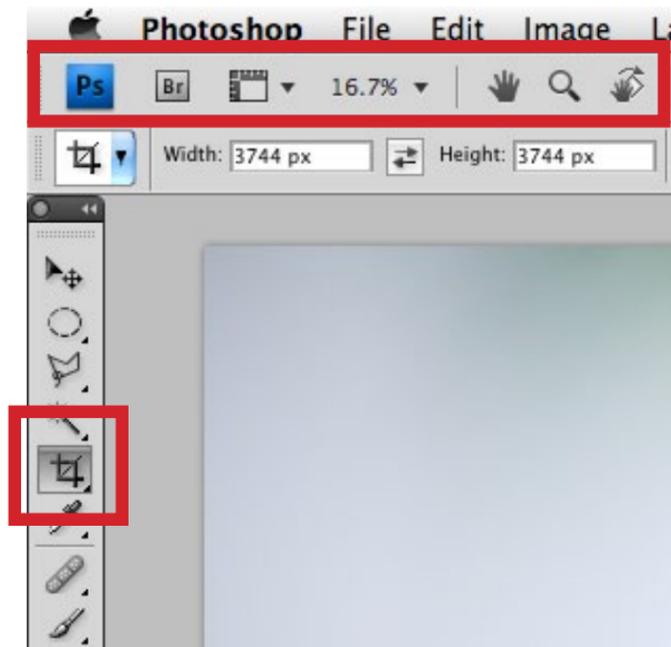
Method Two: maximise image size

The previous method is quick and easy, but really we want to avoid wastage and use as much of the photo as possible, and this means cropping from edge to edge along the shortest distance. If your photos are well composed in the first place, this should be easy.



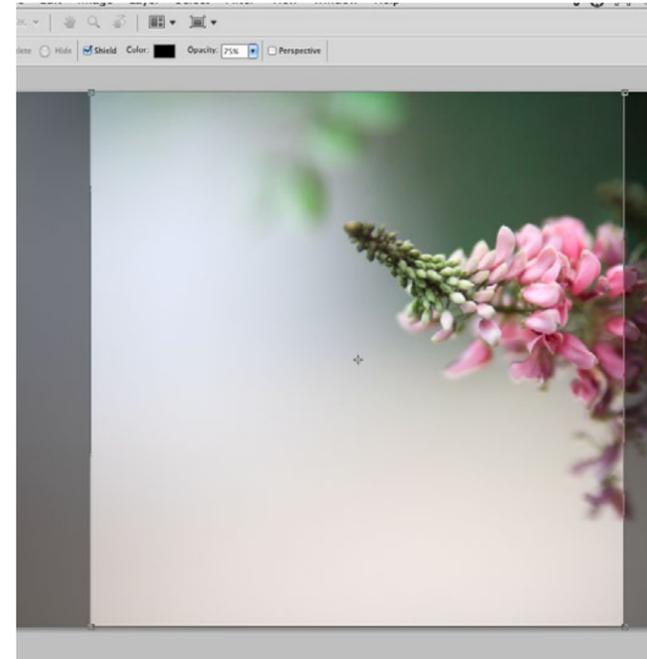
1. ▲

Go to **Image > Image size**. This shows the physical dimensions of the photo. Make a note of the size in pixels of the shortest edge – in this case 3744 pixels.



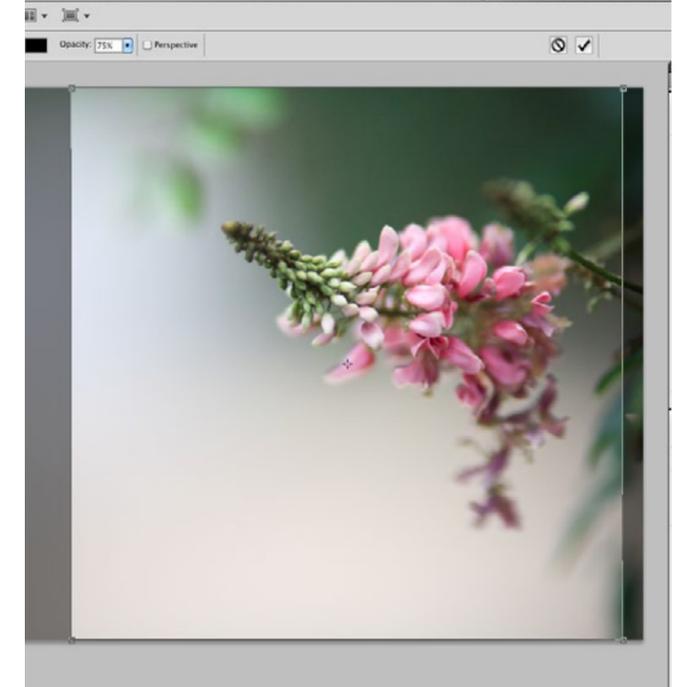
2. ▲

Select the **Crop Tool** from the Tools palette. Enter the shortest pixel dimension – in this case 3744 pixels – into both the **Width** and **Height** fields. This sets the size that you will crop to.



3. ▲

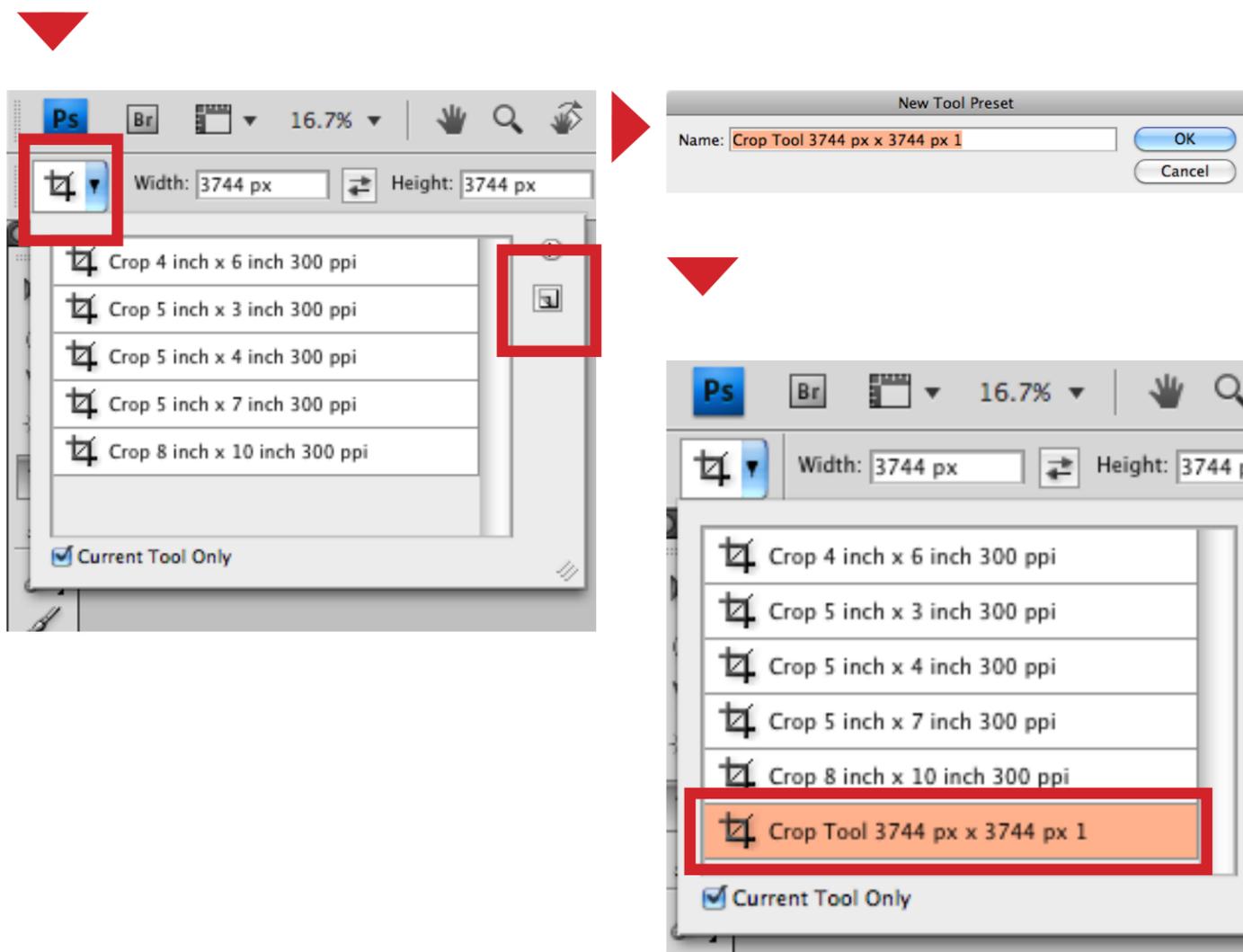
Starting at one edge, draw a square over the photo with the mouse (there is no need to hold the **Shift** key down to retain the shape of the crop). Make sure that you do go from edge to edge – if you make a smaller square Photoshop will resize the cropped image using interpolation so that it matches the pixel dimensions you entered.



4. ▲

Hold the **Shift** key down and click and drag with the mouse to move the crop square from side to side (or up and down if the photo is vertical). The **Shift** key keeps the crop square aligned with the edges of the photo. You can also use the arrow keys for fine adjustment – hold down the Shift key while you use the arrow keys to make the square mover further. Press the Return key to crop, or the **Escape** key to exit without making changes.

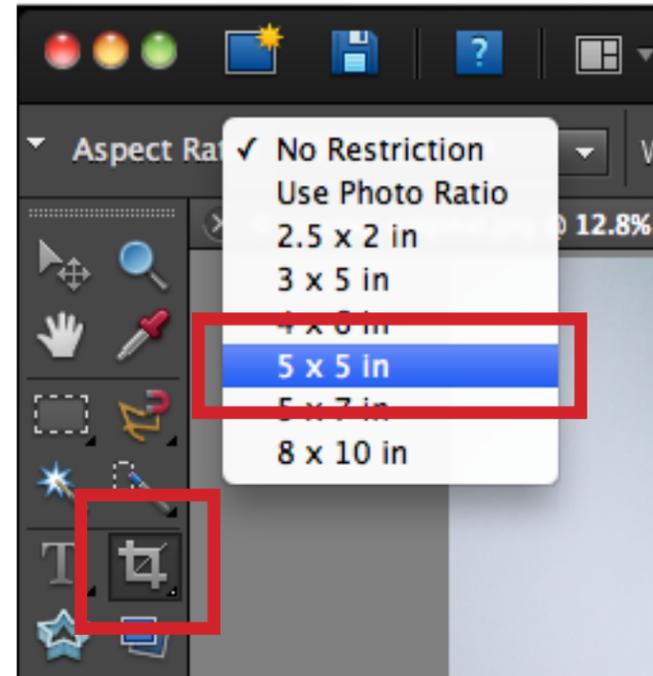
5. Here's how you can save the cropping information so that you can use it again. Click on the arrow next to the **Crop Tool** icon in the **Options toolbar**. A set of predetermined options appears underneath (none of them are square). Click the **Create new tool preset** icon to add the square crop that you created to the list. Now you can return to it in the future without typing in the pixel dimensions again – useful for cropping photos taken with the same camera.



"In photography there is a reality so subtle that it becomes more real than reality."

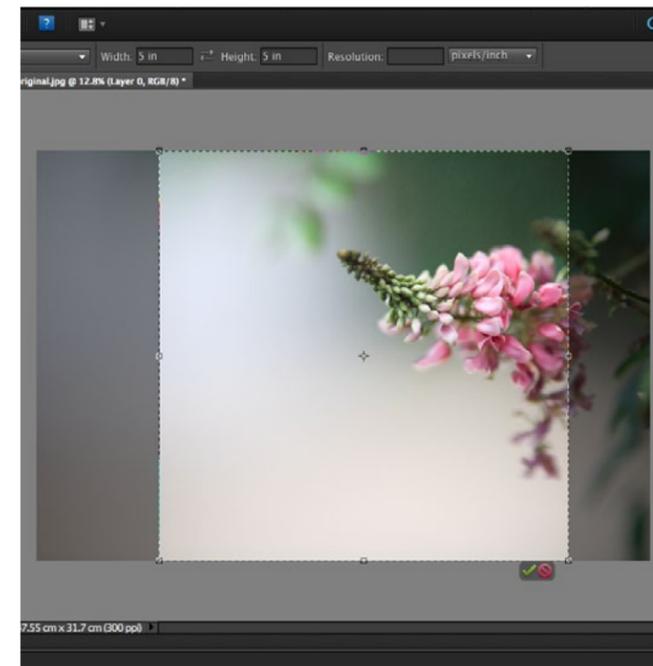
- Alfred Stieglitz

Photoshop Elements



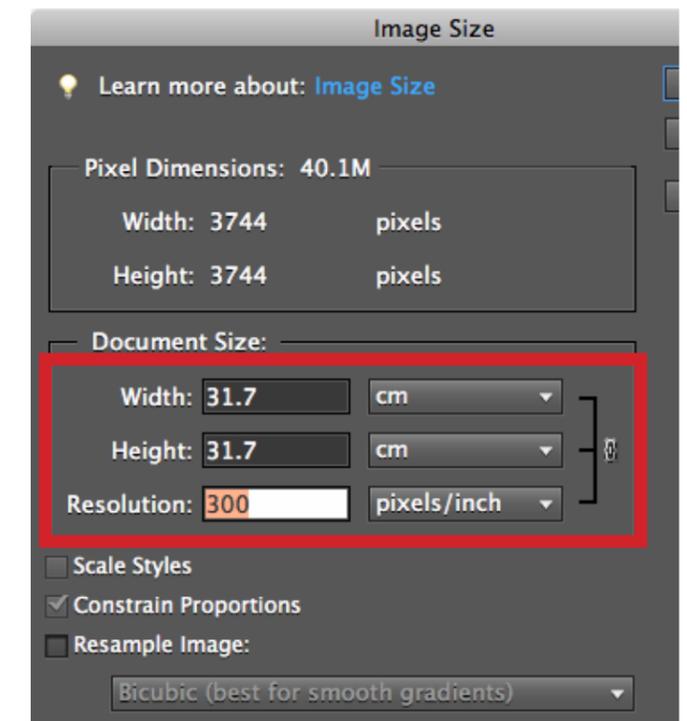
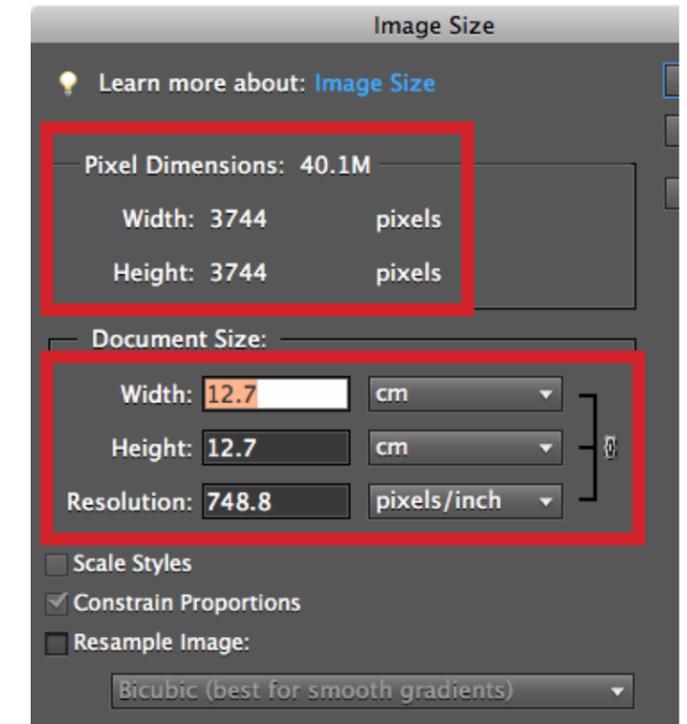
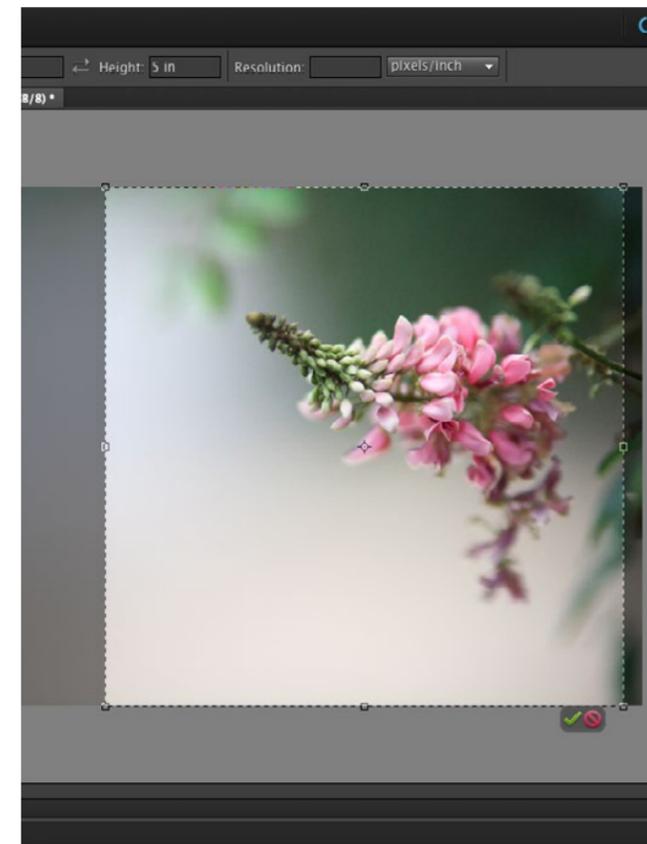
1. ▲ Select the **Crop Tool** from the Tools palette. Go to the Aspect Ratio options and select **5 x 5 in**.

2. ▼ Draw a square across the photo with the mouse. You can make the square any size you like – but I recommend that you go from edge to edge to maximise the size of the square image.



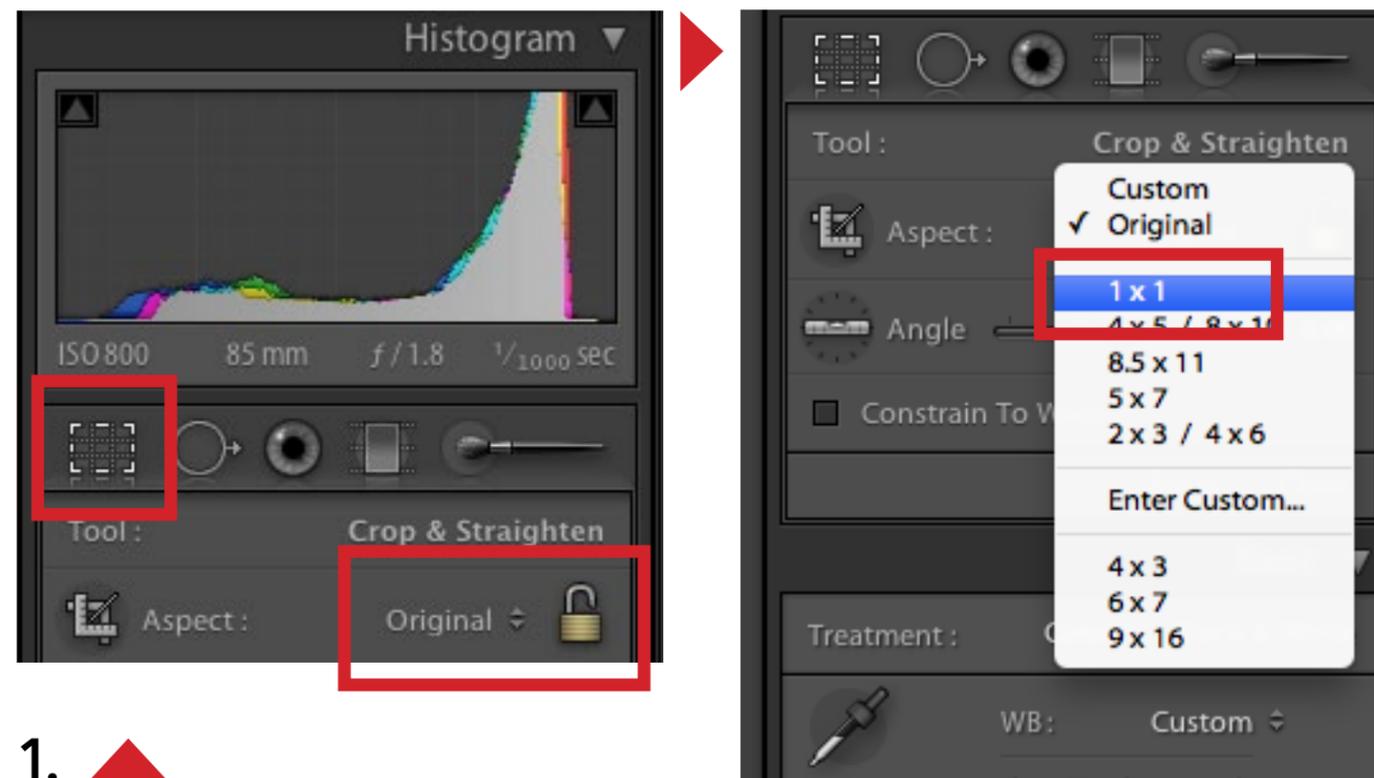
3. ► Move the square with the mouse or the arrow keys (hold down **Shift** to move it further with each keypress). Press **Return** when you're happy with the framing to crop, or **Escape** to exit without making any changes.

4. ► Go to **Image > Resize > Image size**. Looking at the figures in the **Image Size** window confirms that no pixels have been lost – instead the pixel resolution has been changed to make cropped image five inches square. Change the **Resolution** to **300 pixels/inch** (the industry standard for photo quality reproduction). Elements changes the width and height of the cropped image to match. Click **OK** when you're done.



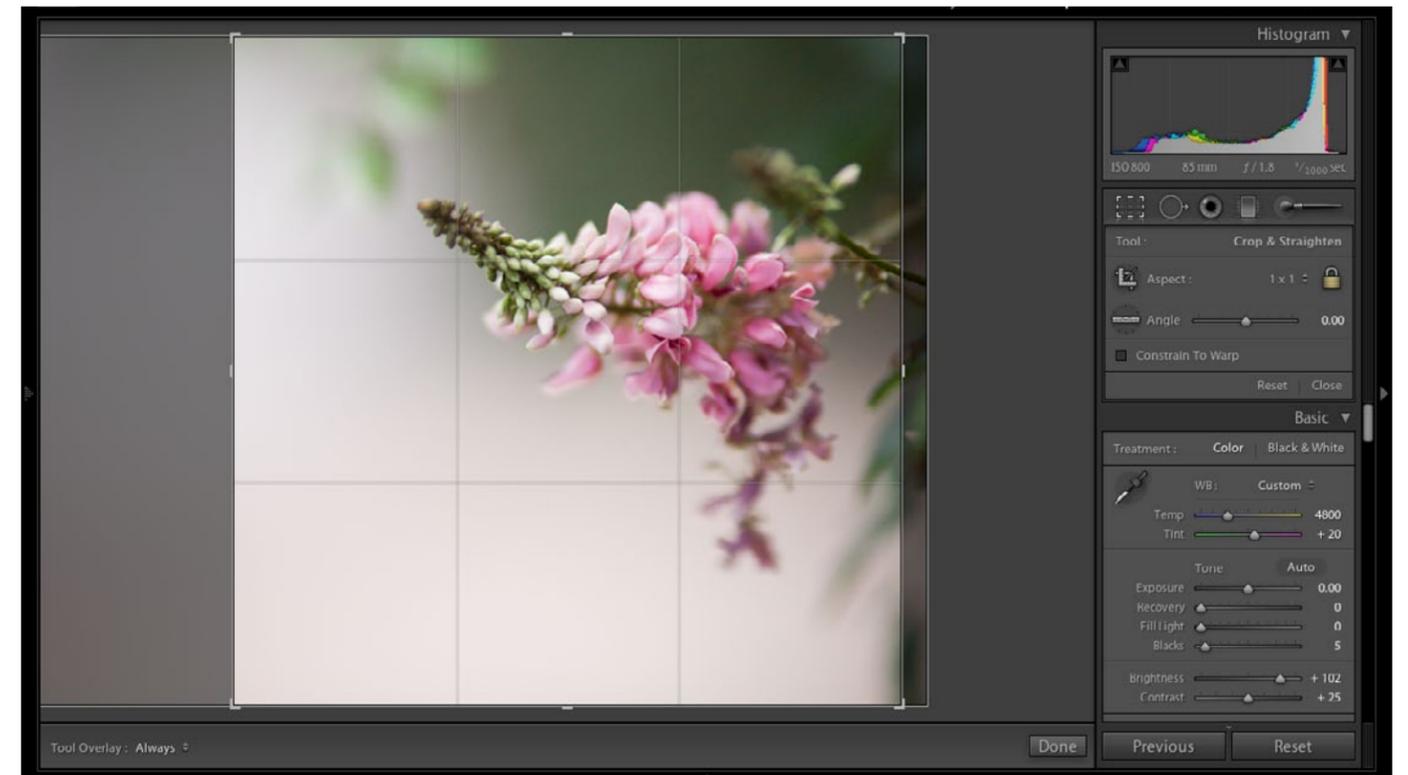
If you're using the Raw format, you have the option of cropping the image either when you process the Raw file (probably the easiest way) or in Photoshop after you have converted the file to the JPEG or TIFF files.

Lightroom



1. ▲

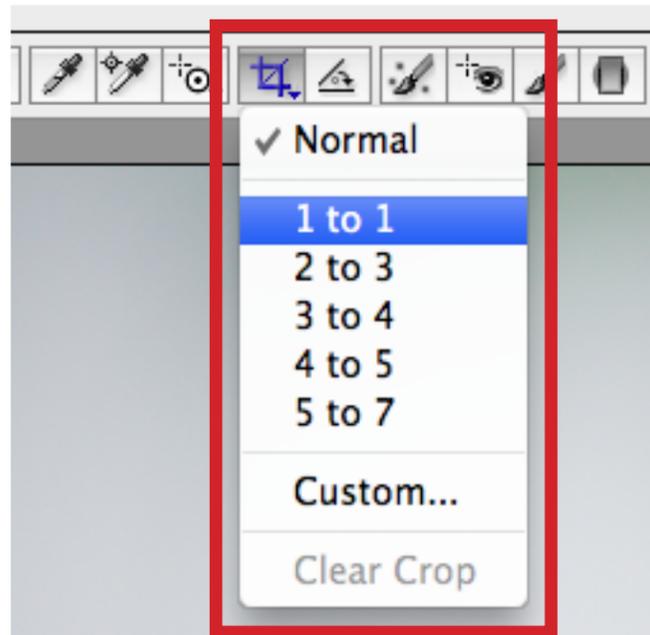
Go to the **Develop** module and click on the **Crop Overlay** icon. Click on the arrows next to the padlock icon under the **Aspect** setting and select the **1 x 1** option.



2. ▲

Drag the square with the mouse to position it. You can also use the arrow keys (hold down the **Shift** key at the same time for larger jumps in position). You can also resize the square by grabbing the corners (but go for an edge to edge crop if you can to maximise the image size). Click the **Done** button to complete the crop or **Escape** to exit without making any changes. You can return to the **Crop Overlay** at any time to make changes.

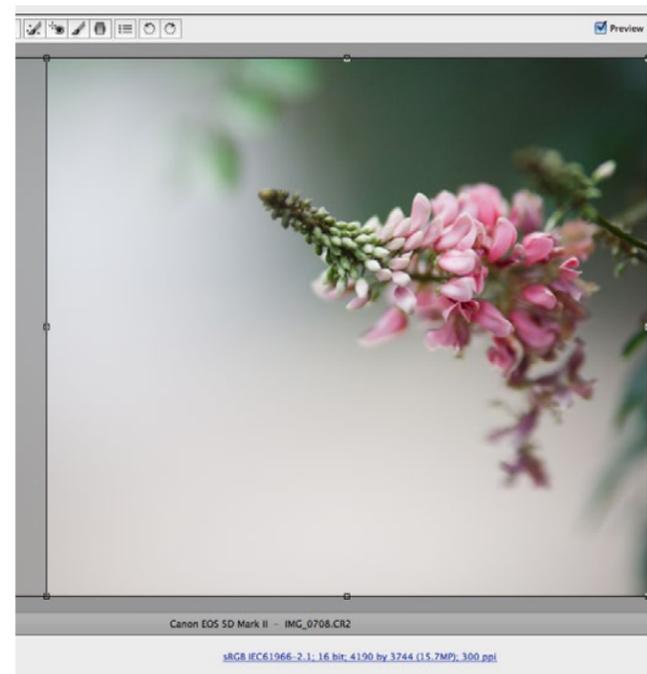
Adobe Camera Raw



1. ▲

Click on arrow by the **Crop Tool** icon and select the **1 to 1** option from the drop down menu.

Tip: This technique is exactly the same for both Photoshop CS and Photoshop Elements.



2. ▲

Draw a square across the image with the mouse. Grab the corners to change the size – although it's a good idea to go for an edge to edge crop when you can to maximise the image size. Press **Return** to finalise the crop or **Escape** to exit without making any changes. You can come back and change the crop at any time.

DPP (Canon only)

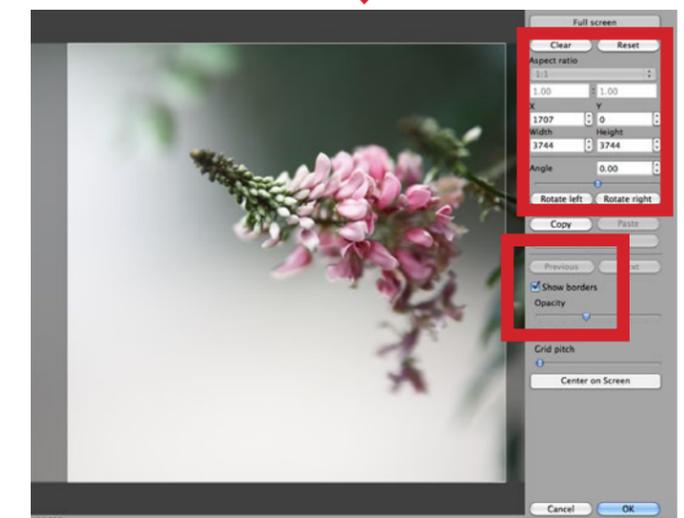
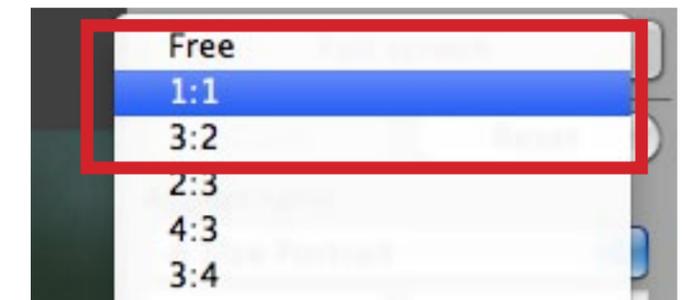
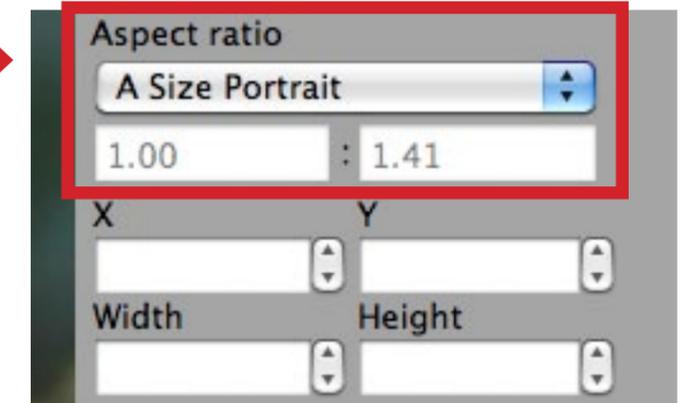


Go to the **Edit Image window** and click on the **Trimming Angle** tool icon.

Go to the **Aspect ratio** drop down menu and select the **1:1** option.

Draw a square over the image with the mouse. The **width** and **height** of the cropped image are displayed in pixels in the information pane. Tick the **Show borders** box to see the border of the cropped image. You can also use the **Angle** setting to rotate the image. Move the square from side to side or change its dimensions with the mouse. Click **OK** when you're done or **Cancel** to exit without making any changes. You can return to the **Trimming Angle** tool at any time. This technique works with JPEG and TIFF as well as Raw files.

Tip: You can update to the latest version of Digital Photo Professional at any time by going to <http://software.canon.europe> and entering your camera model, language and operating system. You must have the original version installed on your computer for this to work.



Appendix B: Vertorama tutorial

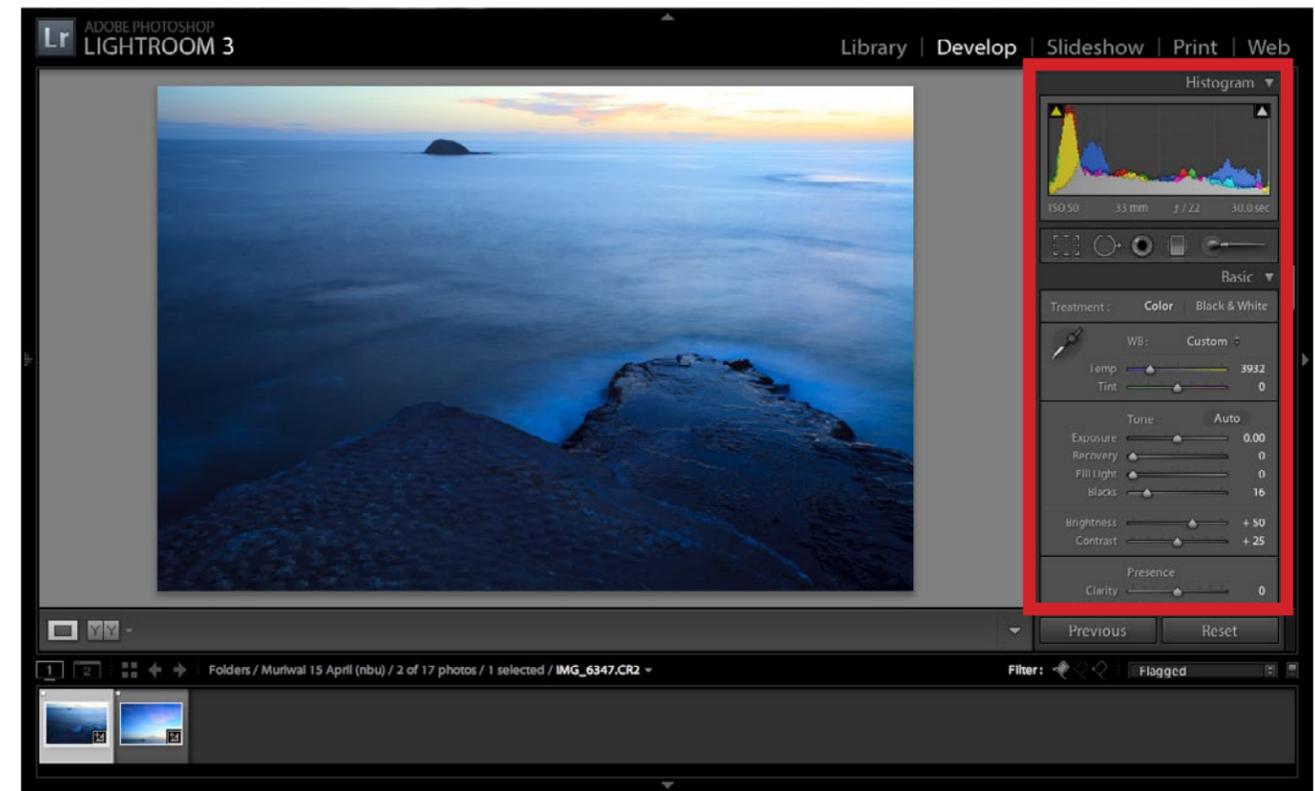


In this tutorial I'm going to show you how I created the photo on page 23. I used Photoshop CS – I've also notes for Photoshop Elements where the process differs.

This technique works well for seascapes like the one above where it's easy to merge the photos at a point where the join is easily hidden – either in the sea or the sky. Some subjects will be harder than others to get a good result – funny things will happen with the perspective if you try photographing a tall building this way, for example (unless you use a tilt-shift lens – see below).

An advantage of this technique is that you can take two images with different exposure settings, one for the land and one for the sky, and combine them to get the best possible image quality in both areas (another reason why vertoramas are ideal for landscape photography).

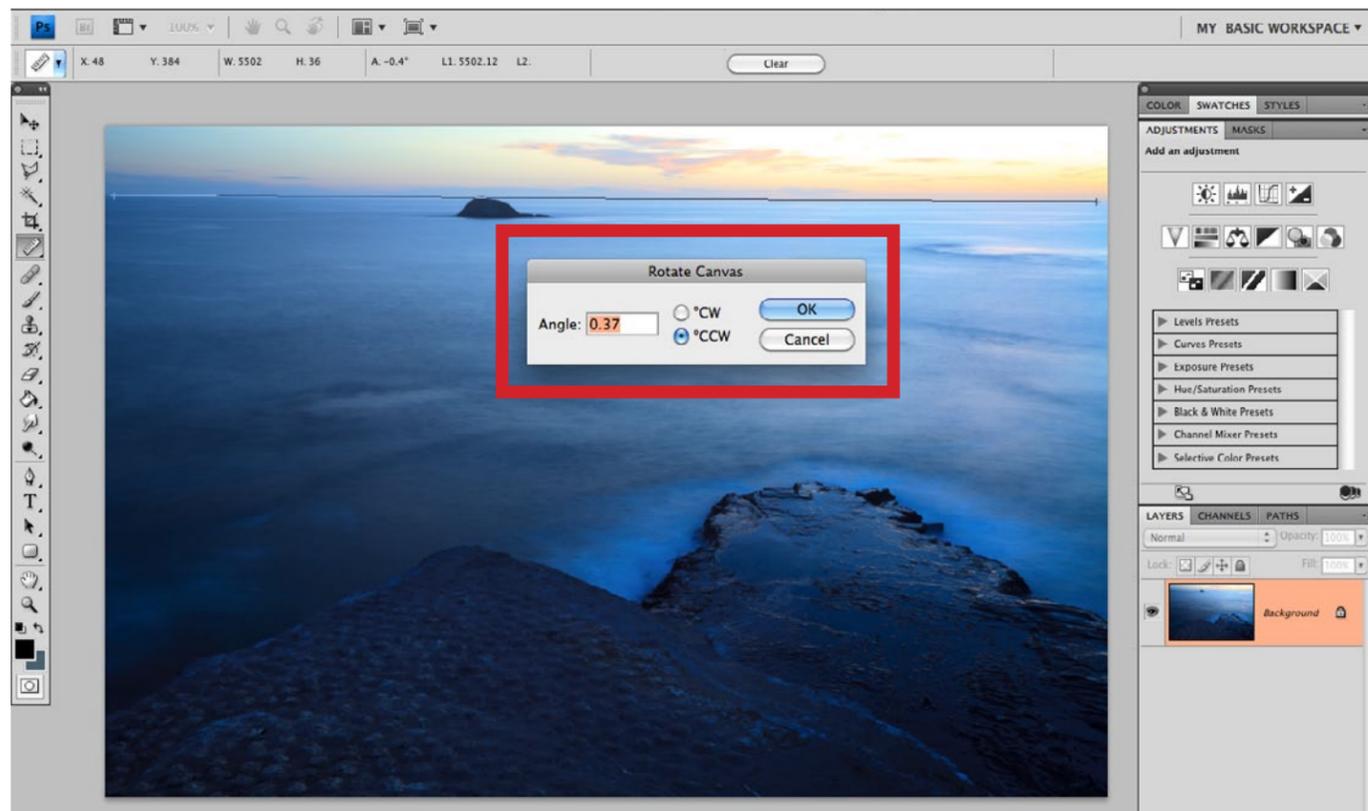
The ideal way to create a vertorama is to use a tilt-shift lens to take two photos with the camera in the same position, but the lens set at opposite ends of the shift mechanism. However, tilt-shift lenses are expensive, specialist items and most photographers don't own one (I created my vertorama using an EOS 5D Mark II and a 17-40mm f4 L lens).



1. ▲

Here, I processed both halves of the image using near identical settings in Lightroom. I did this by editing one raw file, then going to **Settings > Copy Settings**, switching to the other file, and going to **Settings > Paste Settings**. The only tweaks I made was to the exposure as I exposed one for the land, and the other for the sky, then adjusted the exposure levels in Lightroom so that they matched.

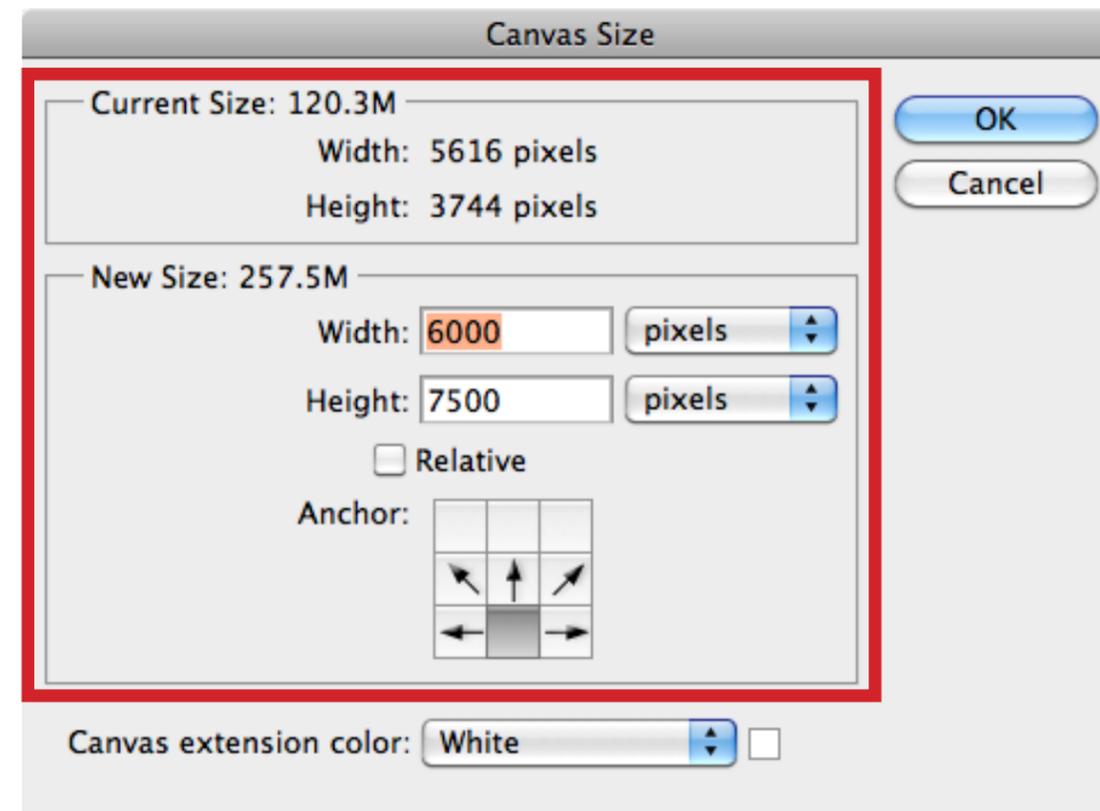
When the photos were ready I exported them by going to **File > Export**. I chose the 16 bit TIFF option under File settings for maximum image quality. If you are using Photoshop Elements, which has limited 16 bit editing capability, you should chose the 8 bit option.



2. ▲

Open both files in Photoshop CS (or Elements). Select the **Ruler Tool** (you'll find it by clicking the arrow next to the **Eyedropper Tool**) and draw a line across the horizon of the 'sea' image. Go to **Image > Image Rotation > Arbitrary**. Photoshop calculates the angle required to straighten the horizon and inserts it in the Angle field for you. Press **OK** to straighten the image.

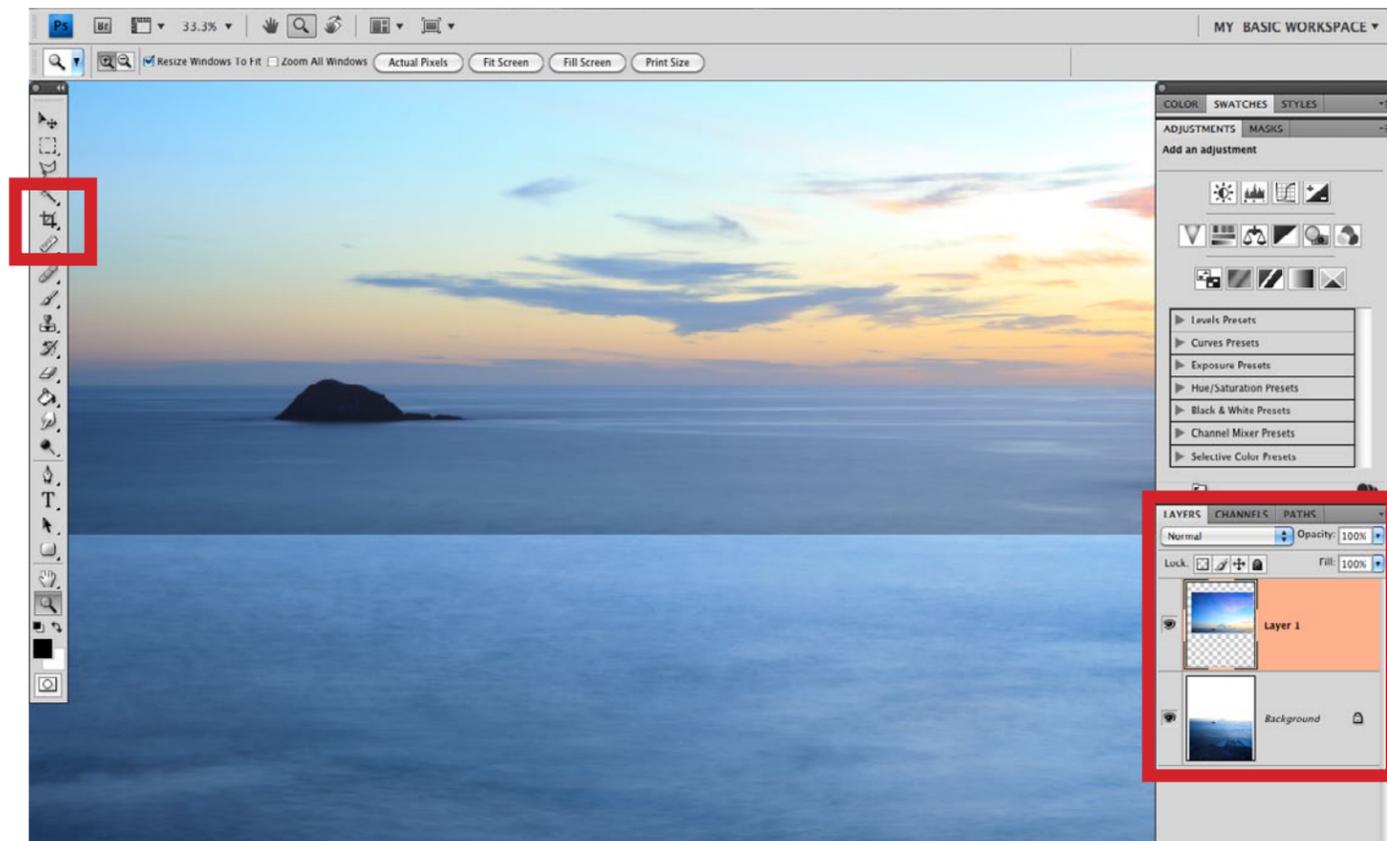
Photoshop Elements doesn't have a **Ruler Tool**, but you can get around this by using the **Crop Tool**. Start by setting the **Aspect Ratio** to **No Restriction** and place the top of the crop rectangle along the horizon. Move the pointer to just outside one of the corners. The pointer will change to a curved arrow. Hold the left mouse button down and rotate the crop rectangle until it follows the horizon. Once the angle is set you can expand the crop rectangle so it contains as much of the image as possible, then press **Return** to complete the crop.



3. ▲

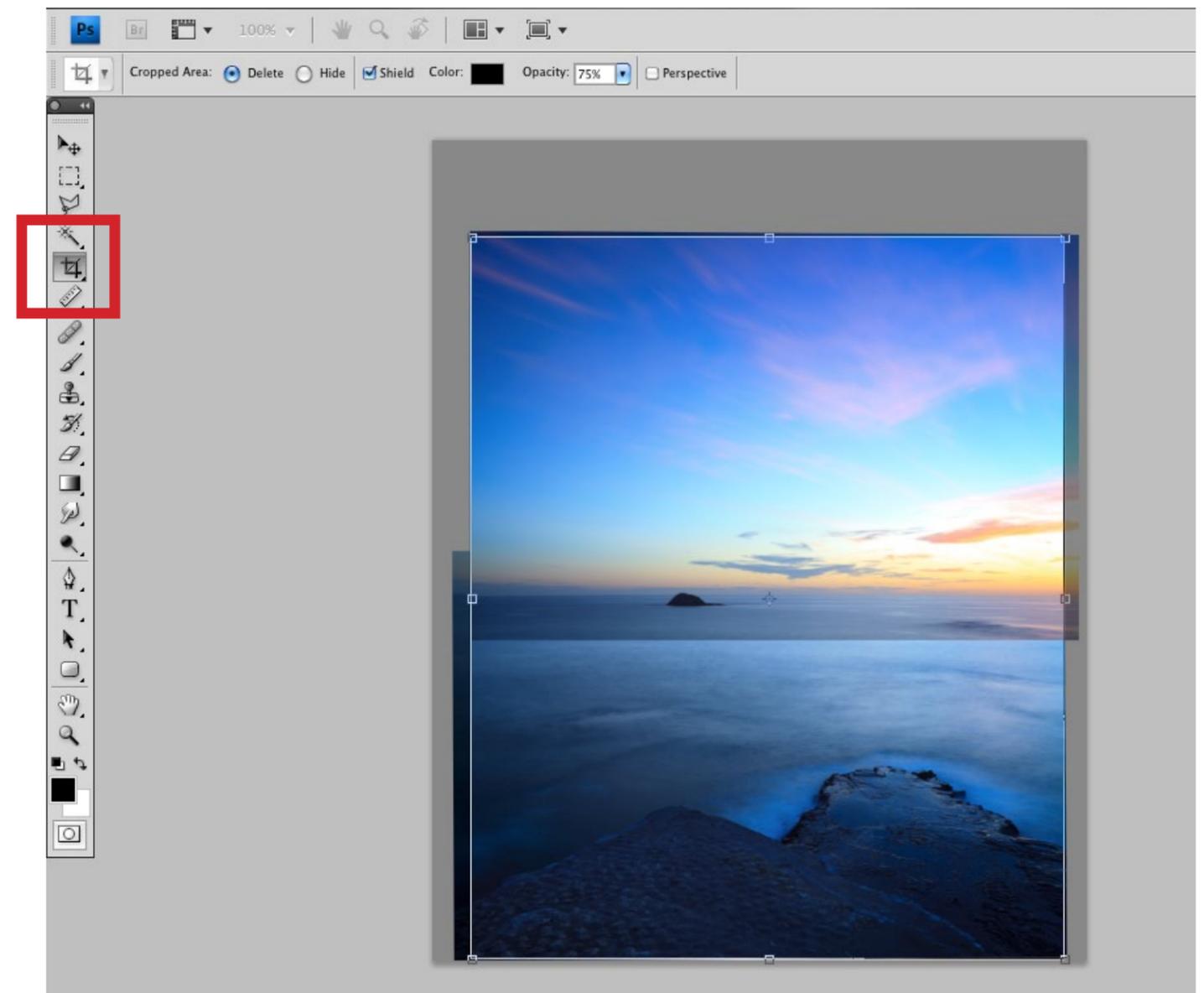
Expand the canvas size by going to **Image > Canvas size** (or **Image > Resize > Canvas Size** in **Elements**). Double the height and make the canvas a little wider to allow for the fact that the two files are unlikely to line up precisely (I expanded the canvas from **5616 x 3744** to **6000 x 7500** pixels). Anchor the original file to the bottom centre and press **OK** when you're done.

Tip: To get the best out of this technique you should use the Raw format, as it gives you precise control over the development of your images. You also have more leeway when it comes to adjusting brightness and contrast due to the extra information contained in the 12 (or 14 bit) files.



4. ▲

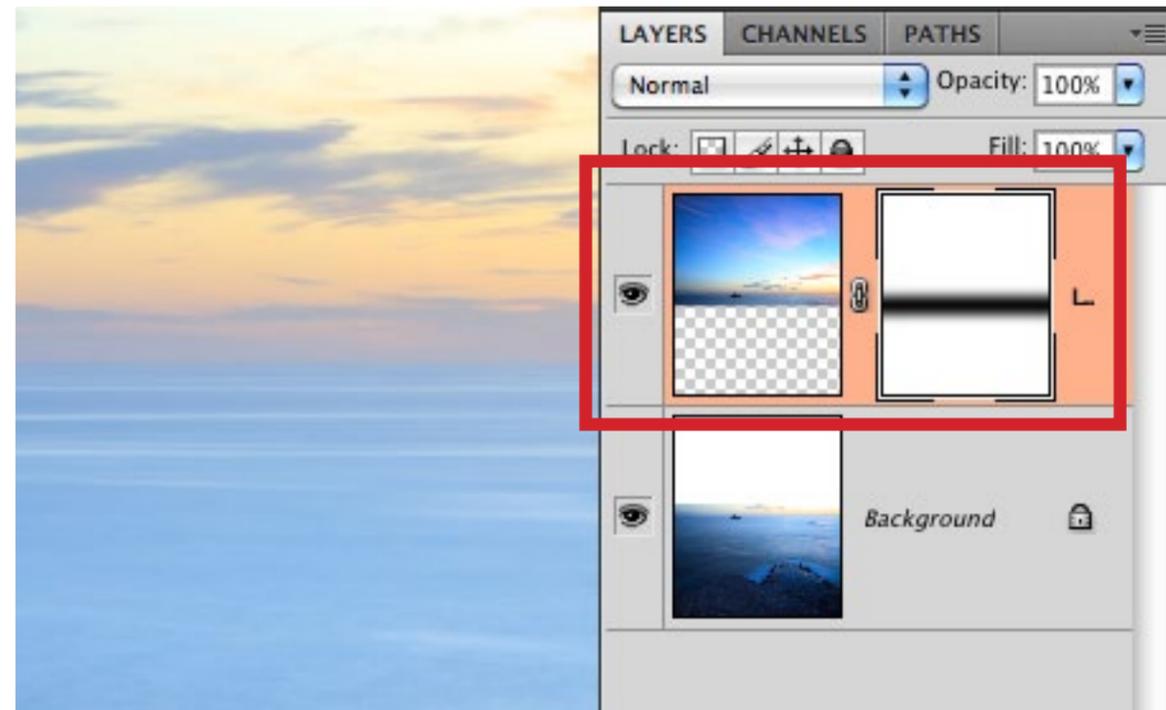
Go to the 'sky' file and use the **Ruler Tool** again to straighten the horizon (**Elements** users can use the **Crop Tool** workaround). Use the **Crop Tool** to get rid of any white space at the bottom of the image then copy it (**Select > All** then **Edit > Copy**). Close the file and return to the 'land' file. Go to **Edit > Paste** to paste the 'sky' file over the top. The result is a file with two layers. Use the **Move Tool** to align the top layer with the bottom one – you can change the **Opacity** of the layer to around **60%** and zoom in to help you see where to join them. Change the **Opacity** back to **100%** when the two halves are aligned.



5. ▲

Select the **Crop Tool** and crop away the white sides of the image. This helps you see how successful the blend is without being distracted by unwanted parts of the image.

6.

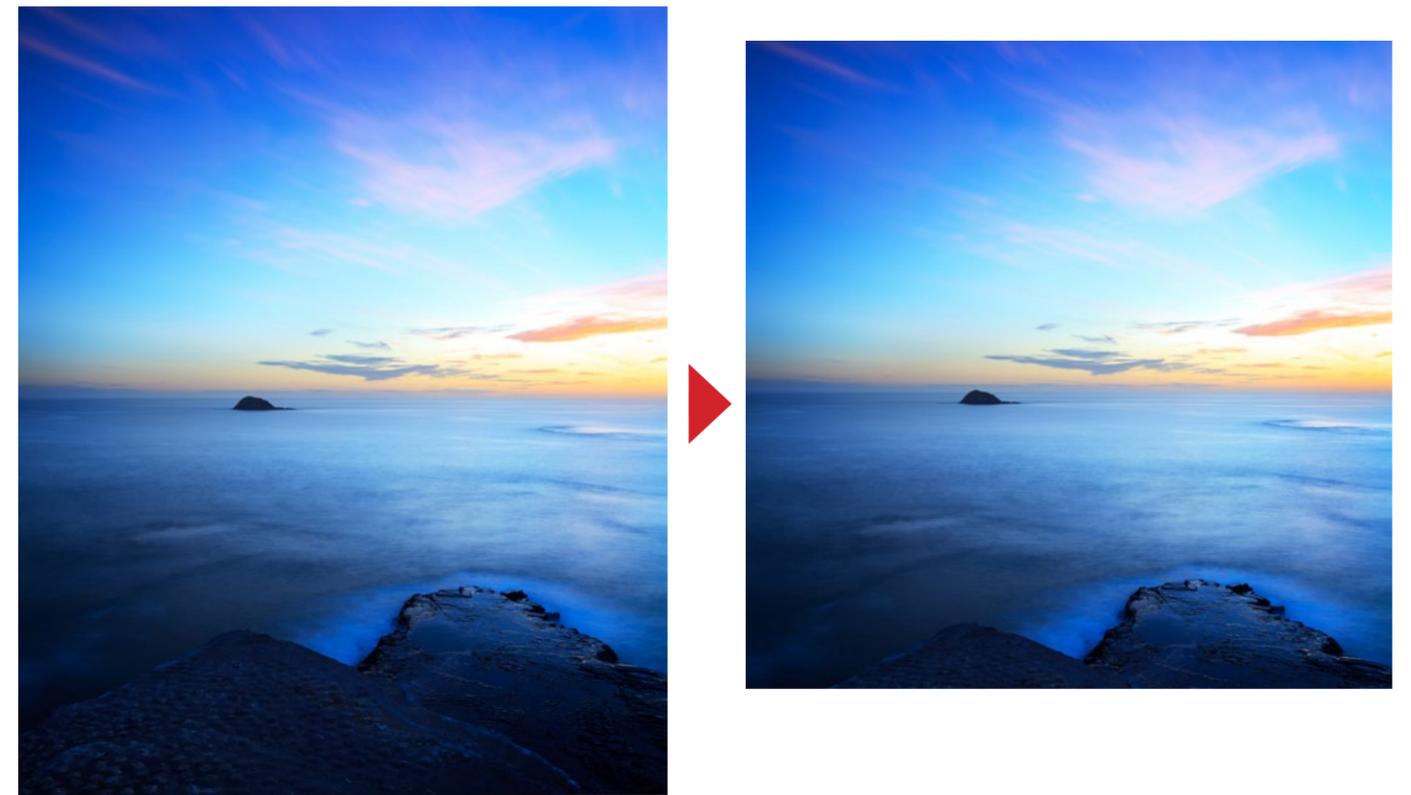


Select the **Rectangular Marquee Tool** and draw a rectangle across the join. The join should be in the centre of the rectangle – extend the rectangle a tenth of the way or so up the top photo depending on the area you want to merge.

Go to **Select > Refine Edge**. Set **Smooth** to **100** and **Feather** to around **150**. Make sure the **Preview** box is ticked so that you can see the effect. Press **OK** when you're done.

Go to **Select > Inverse** to inverse the selection. Make sure the top layer is active and create a new layer mask by clicking the **Add Layer Mask** icon at the bottom of the **Layers Palette**. The layer mask is displayed to the right of the layer thumbnail. The black part of the layer mask was created by the selection and is the part of the layer that won't be displayed.

Zoom in to see how effective the join is. You may have to make adjustments to the levels or colour balance to one or both layers to get a good match.



7.

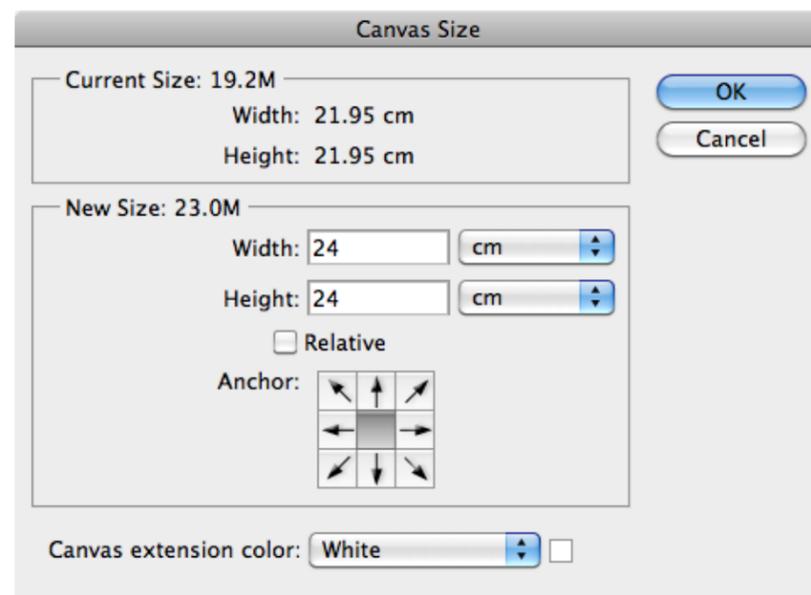
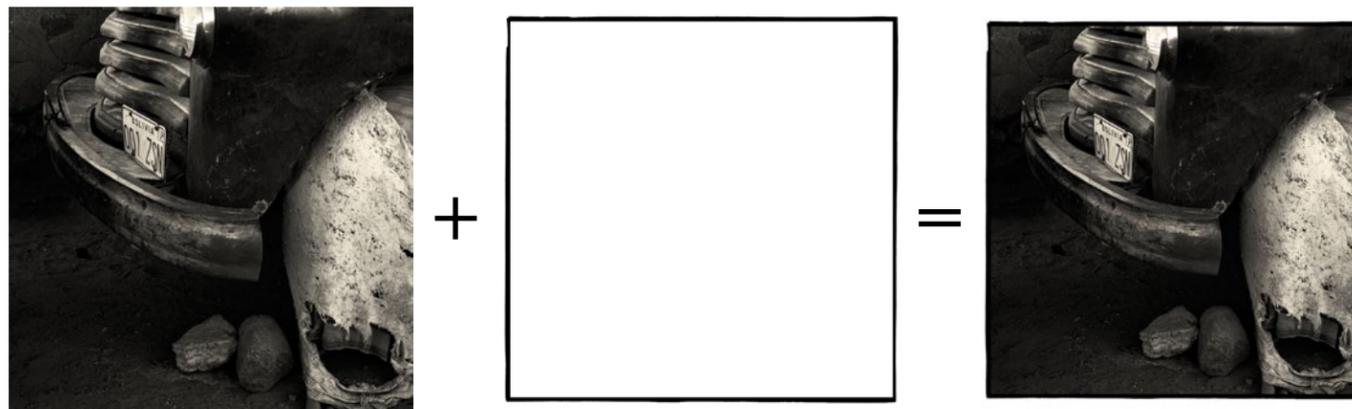


If you're happy with the composition, there's nothing to stop you using this as your final image. However, we want to create a square image so it needs one last crop. Go to **Layer > Flatten** to merge the layers. Follow the instructions on page 41 to crop the image to a square.

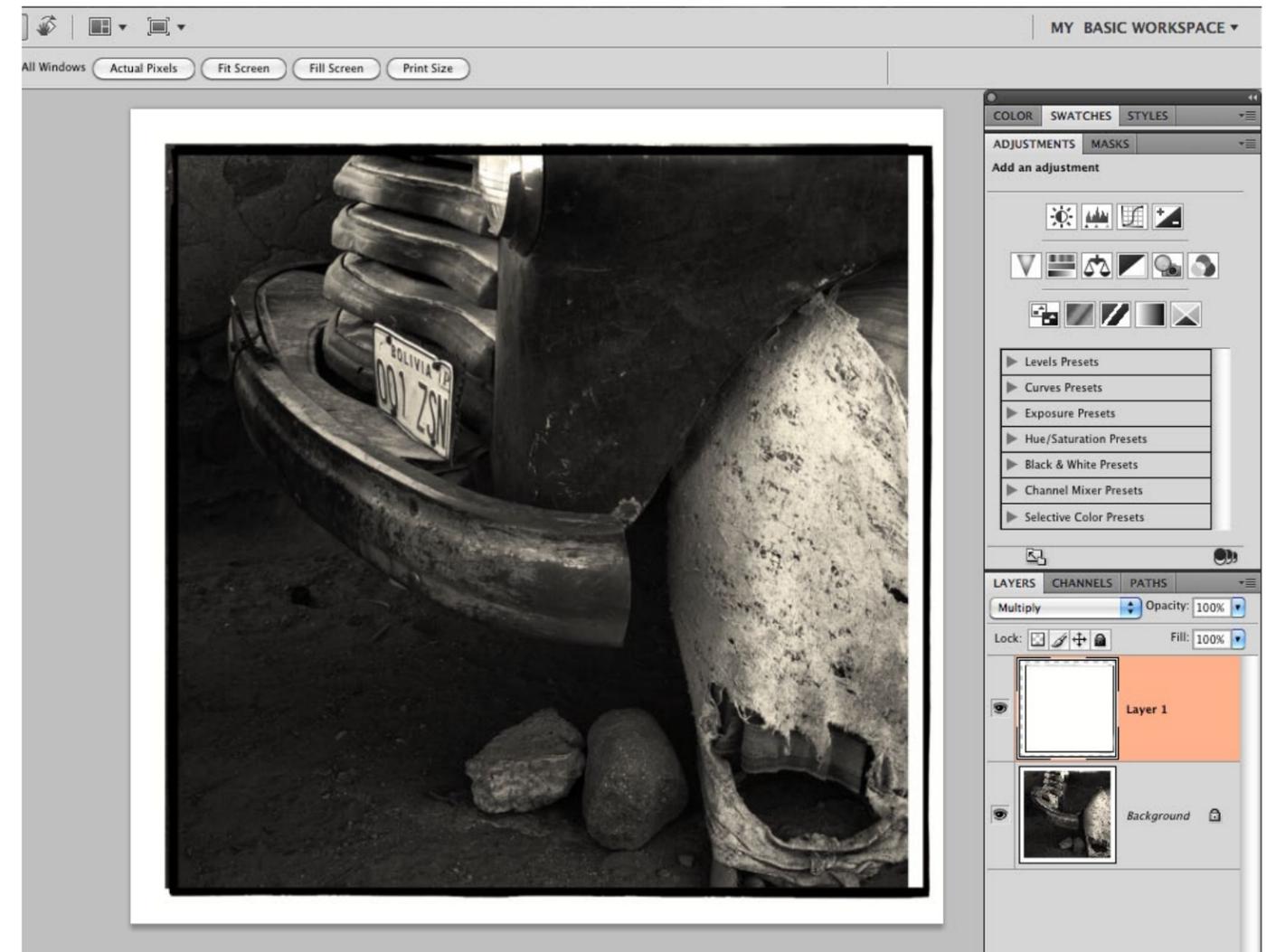
At this stage you can make further adjustments in terms of levels, colour balance, contrast and so on until you are happy with the image.

Appendix C: Adding a black border

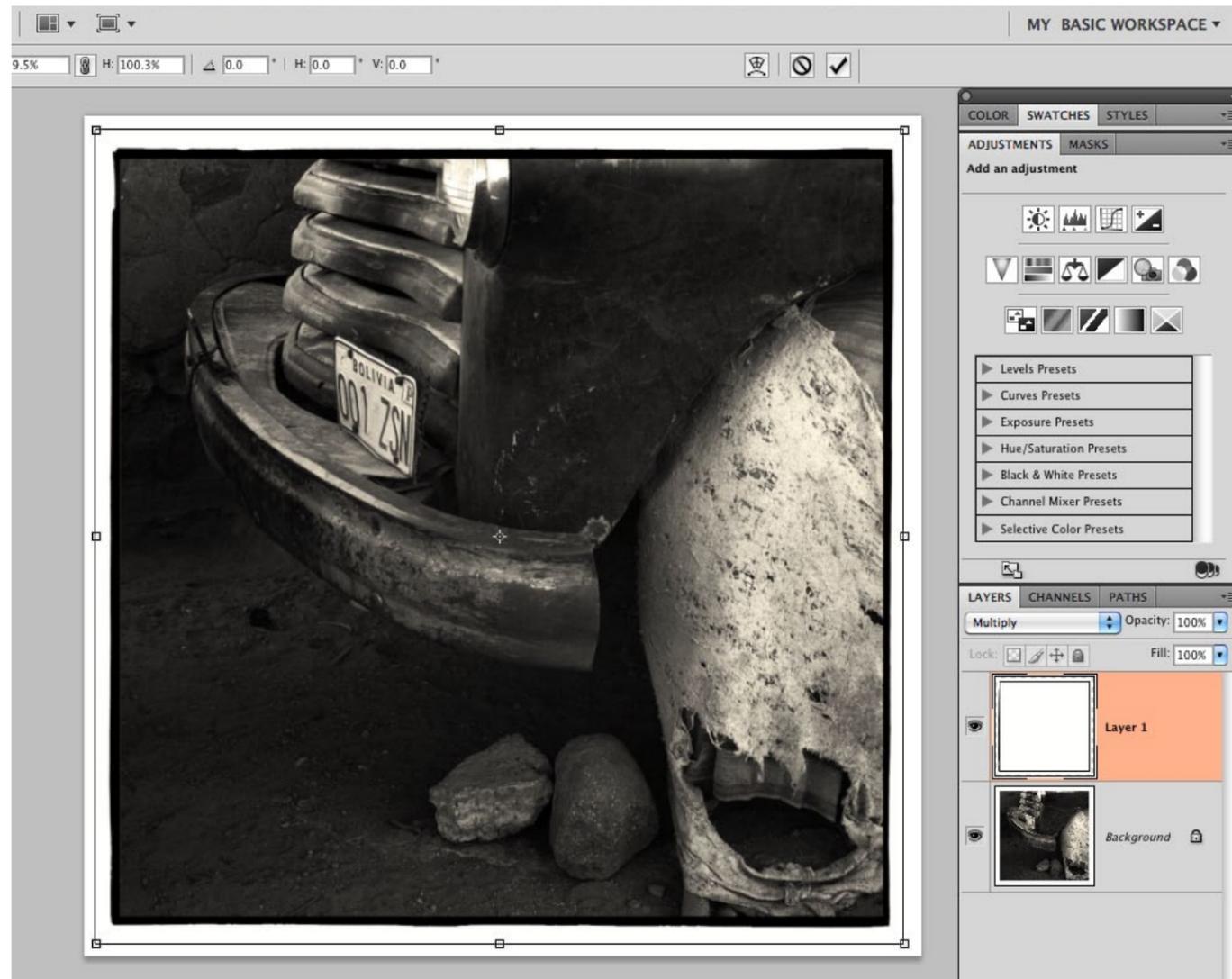
This tutorial is for Photoshop CS/CC. The process is the same for Photoshop Elements.



1.  Open both files in Photoshop CS/CC (or Elements). Go to the photo and expand the canvas size by a couple of centimetres or so (more if you have a thick border) by going to **Image > Canvas Size**. Set the Canvas extension colour to white.

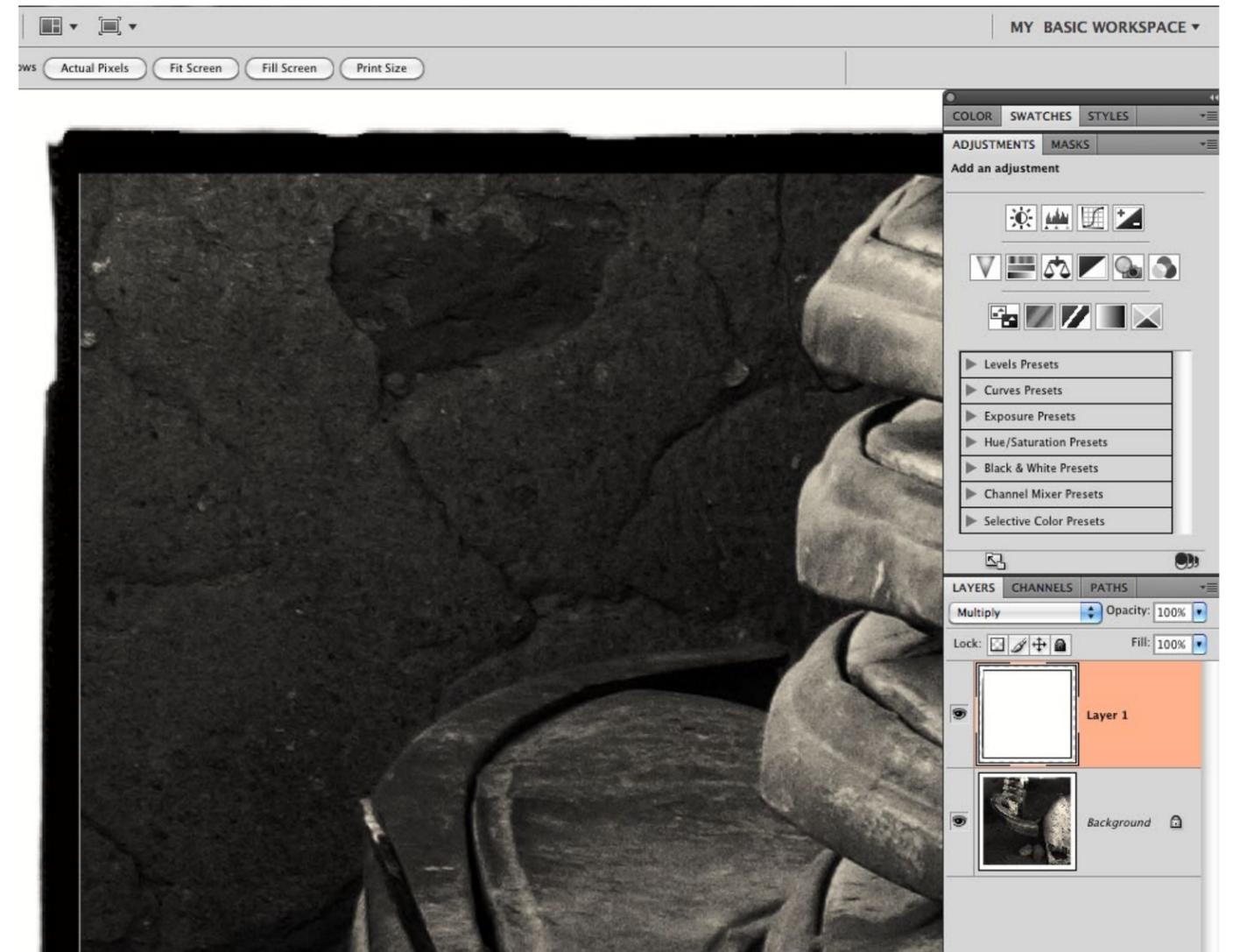


2.  Open the border file and select it by going to **Select > All** then **Edit > Copy**. Go back to the photo file and paste the black border on top of it by going to **Edit > Paste**. The border is on a new layer over the photo. The border layer is opaque and you can't see the photo underneath, so change the layer blending mode to multiply. The white disappears, leaving the black border superimposed over the photo.



3. ▲

Go to **Edit > Transform > Scale**. Use the mouse to resize the border to fit around the photo and press Return when you're done.



4. ▲

Select the Zoom Tool, right click on the image (Ctrl-click if you have a Mac) and select **Actual Pixels** from the options. This enlarges the image to pixel size so that you can see if there are any gaps between the photo and the black border. If there are, go to **Edit > Transform > Scale** again to resize the border at 100 percent magnification. When you're done, go to **Layer > Flatten image** and save the file under a new name so you don't overwrite the original.



Square

Andrew S Gibson

About the author

I'm a freelance writer. I specialise in writing about photography and my clients include EOS magazine, Craft & Vision and Peachpit Press. I also carry out technical editing on forthcoming photography books. My features have also been published in Practical Photography and Better Photoshop Techniques magazines, and my photos have appeared in many more photographic publications.

AndrewSGibson.com/blog

andrewsgibsonwriter@gmail.com

Design & layout: Andrew S Gibson

Copyright © 2011-2014 Andrew S Gibson

Notice of rights

All rights reserved. No part of this ebook may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means without the permission of the author.